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Trials & Tribulations Encountered During the Development & Teaching of a Dual-Delivery Format Research Methods Course

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Trials & Tribulations Encountered

During the Development & Teaching

of a Dual-Delivery Research Methods Course

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Abstract

This paper focuses on developmental and pedagogical/sociological issues related to a doctoral level research methodology course. This course is delivered in two formats, resident (face-to-face) and distance (web-based on Blackboard). Pedagogical, sociological, course development, course delivery, issues and challenges for both formats are discussed. An annotated bibliography is also included.

Trials & Tribulations Encountered During the

Development & Teaching of a Dual-Delivery

Research Methods Course

Doctorate of Education students in most programs across the country have a certain reticence and fear when it comes to enrollment in their required research methods course. At Liberty University (LU) this particular course, Quantitative & Qualitative Research Methods, has an added complicating dimension affecting both the faculty and students. Since this course is delivered in two formats, resident (face-to-face) and distance (web-based on Blackboard), the instructor must be able to teach the course in both modalities. As for the students, because they are allowed a choice, they must decide which modality is most appropriate for their particular needs. The major focus of this paper is on the developmental, pedagogical, and sociological issues related to the dual format nature of this course.

Statement of Problem

How can the development of a doctoral level research methods course be accomplished while meeting the diverse needs of two different delivery systems (residence and distance)?

Research Questions

In addition to the statement of the problem the following research questions were posed.

1) What were the steps necessary for developing an on-line Blackboard-based doctoral level research methods course?

2) What were some of the specific problems encountered when using Blackboard?

3) How can the experience gained from teaching of a face-to-face research

methods course be used to develop a distance research methods course?

Review of Literature

While the problem stated above was not completely addressed by the review

of literature, a great deal was gleaned from an examination of related issues.

Consequently, the following items were included in the review of literature: (a) Doctoral

preparation programs in education, (b) Distance delivery versus classroom delivery, (c)

Teaching aspects of distance web-based instruction, (d) Social aspects of distance and

Web-based instruction, (e) Evaluation techniques for distance education courses.

Overview of Doctoral Preparation Programs in Education

The call for improving doctoral programs in education is not new, however the

NCLB act, along with other federal legislation, has placed a renewed focus on the

research content of such programs. Eisenhart & DeHaan (2005), describe six guiding

principles, which they believe should be part of the content of an educational doctoral

program for a research professional. These are:

1. To pose significant questions that can be investigated empirically;

2. To link research to relevant theory;

3. To use methods that permit direct investigation of the question;

4. To provide an explicit and coherent chain of reasoning;

5. To replicate and generalize across studies; and

6. To make research public to encourage professional scrutiny and critique.

Continuing, Eisenhart and DeHaan assert that:

. . . the general processes of inquiry in interpretive and experimental

sciences are virtually identical. In both cases, inquiry is a process of

relying on previous work to specify new empirical investigations that lead to

warranted conclusions. In both cases, warranted conclusions are arrived at by

conducting empirical investigations, making links to previous research, using

methods that are appropriate to the questions asked, articulating a chain of

reasoning, and exposing the inquiry process and the reasoning . . . For us, then,

a fundamental component of training programs that prepare scientifically based

education researchers is socialization into these norms of scientific inquiry

(p. 5).

In addition, Eisenhart and DeHaan propose that educational researchers need

training in five broad areas: (a) diverse epistemological perspectives; (b) diverse

methodological strategies; (c) the varied contexts of educational practices; (d) the

principles of scientific inquiry; and (e) interdisciplinary research orientation (p. 7).

Furthermore, they noted that "it is unlikely that a single graduate program could

cover well all five broad areas" (p 9).   They suggest that colleges or universities should

choose one or two emphases among the five. Finally in a section titled, "Outline for a

Doctoral Program in Scientifically Based Education Research," they suggest there be four

basic components: 1) Core course, 2) Research experience, 3) Teaching experience, and

4) Interdisciplinary collaborations (p. 10).

Distance versus Classroom Delivery

In their article entitled, *The Web Versus the Classroom: Instructor Experiences in*

Discussion-based and Mathematics-based Disciplines, Smith, Ferguson, & Caris,

elucidated some of the major questions and issues related to distance versus classroom

instructional modes:

In the recent surge into Web-based distance education, universities

are often pressuring faculty to teach courses over the Web. Many faculty, relative

novices to this modality, wonder what challenges await them. They wonder,

perhaps with trepidation, to what extent their skills transfer to this new medium.

Therefore an important question is: What are the differences in the instructor

experience between teaching over the Web versus face-to face courses, in terms

of teaching strategy, social roles of faculty and students and emergent issues?

Other faculty, with more distance teaching experience, may not have shared their

insights nor read the literature on distance education. Their knowledge remains

fragmented. These faculty may question whether their experiences with teaching

online are specific to their content area or representative of the larger experience

of teaching over the Web (2003, p. 29-30).

Teaching Aspects of Distance Web-based Instruction

In addition, Smith, et al. (2003) found that "it usually requires a considerable

amount of time to design and develop an online course" (p. 31). They also suggested that

the instructor organize the course into modules of fixed time duration, which are self-

paced with specific due dates and set penalties for late work.

In addition, there must be an adequate number of instructional activities in which

there is ample instructor feedback, along with numerous student-to-instructor

interactions. These interactions result in a much heavier faculty workload. This increased

workload is found to require as much as two hours per day (Conne-Syrcos, & Syrcos,

2000).

Social Aspects of Distance and Web-based Instruction

Regarding social aspects of web-based instruction and the preparation of educational researchers there are some thorny problems. One such problem relates to a call for an emersion into the socialization processes related to the principles of scientific inquiry, specifically for research programs in education (Eisenhart & DeHaan). On the other hand, researchers state, "that distance education reduces education to a kind of industrial process, lacking the human dimension of group interaction, and even alienating learners from teachers" (Smith, et al., p. 32). Furthermore, the distance pedagogical model is compared to the mass-production assembly line that is isolated and lonely. This is far removed from the need for the educational researcher to experience firsthand the culture of research. Eisenhart & DeHaan further illuminate the situation:

> In addition, graduate programs in education research must find ways to socialize students into the culture of science without the advantage of full-time focus or commitment. They must instill the culture of science without the benefit of the resources for research apprenticeships that characterize training in the physical and biological sciences. They must do so with fewer overall resources and with a more diverse student population. And they must accomplish all of this in ways that enable graduating education researchers to participate in investigation that cut across the broad range of fields and methods that bear on education related questions. Succeeding at all of this is no small task (2005, p. 8).

On a more conceptual/sociological level, there are at least three types of interactions that take place in a distance educational setting. These are: 1) learner-content interaction; 2) learner-instructor interaction; and 3) learner-learner interaction. Such an

arrangement leads to an instructor shift from being a content provider to one of being a facilitator. This may be in conflict with certain cultural views of learning (Smith, et al. p. 32).

In addition to the review of literature, there are a number of university and program specific items that are important considerations in attempting to solve the problems presented in this paper. These are presented next.

Nature of the Liberty University Doctorate Program

The Doctorate of Education program at LU is an Ed. D. in Educational Leadership. It is designed to prepare competent and effective leaders who will model high standards, while assuming a leadership role in a particular chosen field of education. The majority of students come into the program already in some type of leadership role, typically consisting of superintendents, principals, curriculum directors, instructors, teachers, and college or university administrators. These leadership roles are quite diverse in nature as the students may come from a secular leadership role or Christian leadership role.

The program consists of a combination of residential coursework and distance coursework, much of which is in a Blackboard format. To satisfy the residence requirement the student must complete a minimum of 12 hours in residence out of a total of 60.

General Nature of the Course and the Big Picture. The major purpose of the LU Quantitative & Qualitative Research Methods course relates to preparing the student for writing a research proposal for a dissertation. This is emphasized throughout both course formats and referred to as the "Big Picture."   The tasks and assignments are related to the

later task of writing the research proposal for a committee who oversees the writing of the doctoral dissertation.

The resultant dissertation is expected to exhibit scholarship, reflect mastery of technique, and make a distinctive contribution to the field in which the candidate has majored. The student has a program concentration and a cognate. These are administration, curriculum, instruction, and instruction and curriculum. These are in compliance with the TRACS accreditation standard which states that the doctoral program must have a list of prescribed courses in a cognate.

Since LU is NCATE, TRACS and SACS accredited, there are specific accreditation standards for each course that must be met. For example, the TRACS standards specify that "the distance course must be similar to the content of the residence course" and "the off-campus work must clearly be shown by the institution to be the equivalent of on-campus work in such areas as time-on-task, reading, research, writing, and interaction with both faculty and students" (Transnational Association of Christian Colleges and Schools, 2004, p. 40). It is with the above understanding and background that we began the task of course development.

Specific Nature of the Course. The textbook and supplemental materials provide a content base, which addresses basic skills, content, and principles to be mastered in the process of writing a research proposal. Among these are:

1) The writing of a statement of the problem that can be used in a proposal and investigated empirically.

2) The development of a suitable hypothesis.

3) The writing of a review of literature, which adequately addresses the problem statement and links research to relevant theory.

4) The writing of a research methodology, which is adequate to answer the posed problem, including subjects, instruments, and procedures.

5) The writing of an analysis of data section that discusses the data organization and the statistical procedures to be used.

6) The writing of a significance of the study containing implications & application.

7) The development of a time schedule and budget.

Blackboard Design and Use at LU

Distance courses LU are designed and conducted in Blackboard in an eight-week format, therefore the research methods course had to be succinct while maintaining the course content integrity. To present the Blackboard format on the first page of the research methods course in a more user friendly the button menu was rearranged. The format consisted of the following four buttons: 1) About your course, 2) Announcements, 3) Course content, and 4) Communications, which appear at the top left of the first page.

Most of the course components for the research methods course are found under the "Course Content" button. Upon opening the Course Content the student finds eight course module folder icons, which identify each section of study for the course. These are to be completed one per week. Assignments and quizzes are included as parts of individual modules. Blackboard allows for assignments to be submitted directly back to the instructor by clicking on an "assignment link" found within the module folder. This "assignment link" is directly linked to the grade book.

Steps in the Process of Course Development

The final course of action was development of a methodology for developing and implementing the Blackboard-based course. This process consisted of the following steps, which are described in the sections below.

1) Determination of the time frame for the Blackboard course,

2) Selection of a textbook and other appropriate course materials,

3) Planning for a field test of the Blackboard course,

4) Teaching of the face-to face course to refine the Blackboard course, and

5) Developing assessment and evaluation items.

The first major concern was the issue of the course time frame. The residential (face-to-face) time frame was already set and was a total of eight weeks. This is an intensive on-campus component in which the students are in class four hours a day for ten days over a two-week period. Additional class work, assignments, and projects are completed in the rest of the eight-week period. There is a pre-intensive period and a post-intensive period for a total of eight weeks of actual course time. In contrast the LU distance courses are on a different time frame. They consist of a pre-course reading period of four weeks, and eight weeks of Blackboard instruction. During the pre-course period students obtain their books and other materials, read the syllabus, and start reading, however instructor contact is limited.

The second order of business was the selection of appropriate course materials. This entailed selecting an appropriate textbook that would be flexible enough to fit both delivery systems. At first this seemed to be a rather easy task, however, after gathering several potential textbooks (listed as part of the bibliography) several issues and concerns

began to surface. The previous framework for both formats of this course was a sixteen-

week time frame. The following process was used for the textbook selection.

Course Textbook Selection

Potential textbooks were screened on several variables. These included:

1) *Exercises* – It was desired that the textbook have adequate sample exercises.

    Exercises needed to be clearly written and adequately cover the key concepts

    found in the textbook, while moving students toward understanding the "Big

    Picture" for the course. It was also important that the exercises could be

    mastered in a distance format where there was little opportunity to get specific

    exercise feedback. Thus clarity and relevance of the exercises became a

    primary concern for the distance format course.

2) *Need for answers* – There was a need for answers to be provided within the

    textbook. This was a major consideration for two reasons. One, it was

    decided that the instructor did not have time to develop the multitude of

    exercises necessary for such a course. Two, the students would need some sort

    of feedback on exercises. Not all textbooks provided answers to the exercises

    thus causing elimination from further consideration.

3) *Length of text* – The length of the text was another key factor due to the eight-

    week format of the distance course. At first this seemed to be problematic as

    most textbooks used for such a course are based on a standard university

    semester long (or in some cases two semester) time frame. However, viewing

    texts in terms of fit for an eight week timeframe assisted in the process of

    making a choice of texts.

4) *Supplemental materials* – This became an important consideration as the limitations due to other variables came into focus. One particular aspect that came to light was the lack of textbooks addressing research methods from a Christian perspective.

5) *Diversity of student population* – The diversity of students found in the LU doctoral program was a necessary consideration when selecting a text.

Upon review of a number of potential texts, it was apparent that Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh (2002) was a strong candidate. The reasons were:

1) *Exercises* – The Ary text provided adequate sample exercises which were clearly written and adequately covered the key concepts found in the textbook. Many of the exercises focused on the preparation of a proposal.

2) *Need for answers* – The Ary text provided answers at the end of each chapter.

3) *Length of text* – The Ary text was of adequate length and could be adapted to the eight week modular format. However, the text was not as detailed on certain topics as we would have liked.

4) *Supplemental materials* – The Ary text was lacking in the depth that most educational researchers would consider appropriate for a doctoral level course. However, this issue was addressed by using a supplemental text called *Annual Editions: Research Methods.* This volume is a compilation of carefully selected current research based articles. This selection is important for a number of reasons (see annotated bibliography for further details). Another aspect of supplemental materials dealt with the need for materials that would support the Christian perspective. This was partially addressed by use of the website: http://vision.edu/Research/Default.asp. Although limited

in scope, this website provides some examples of research conducted from a Christian perspective.

5) *Diversity of student population* – The Ary text is written at a conceptual level that seems to allow for a diverse population that will be completing the course at LU. However, the text does not address research that could be conducted from a Christian perspective.

Planning for a field test of the Blackboard course

The 2005 residential class of the Research Methods Course was used as field test for submitting information into Blackboard for the distance class. By having resident students refer to Blackboard on a daily basis, both in and out of class, the instructor and his colleague received feedback on content clarity. This procedure, while proving to be efficient, also proved to be challenging. Based on this experience, we are in agreement with Smith et al. (2003) regarding the extensive amount of time required to fully develop a distance format class. While much of the course content was already in a previous Blackboard module, a minimum of one hundred hours was spent in redesigning course content to the eight-week format. The instructor and his colleague worked extensively during the two week residential class and continued to work on the course development during the following month.

Teaching of the face-to face course to refine the Blackboard course

The teaching and development experience became frustrating at times due to several issues. One continual problem was making sure crucial elements of interaction, as discussed by Conne-Syrcos, & Syrcos (2003), were included in course design. An attempt at building student interaction into the reading assignments, the module PowerPoint presentations, and the assignments were made. For the face-to-face class

additional student-instructor interactions were added as part of the field test. These included e-mail, online availability of the instructor, and the instructor contribution to content discussion through the Discussion Board module. Student–to-student interaction was accomplished through Blackboard discussion board modules where students were required to read all of the entries and contribute extensively to a minimum of four threaded discussions.

Yet another issue was time to edit and verify that the Blackboard options had been properly set for student availability. This was particularly important for module quizzes and the final exam. Updating and correcting became a daily process. The decision to do on-the-spot editing and updating saved hours of work for both the instructor and colleague.

In addition, course redesign from the residential to the distance format was a trade-off of problems for both the instructor and the students. One prominent problem was that of providing a support system for the instructor that allowed adequate time and compensation for the redesigning. A related concern was that student needs were different in the distance format, where the instructor's role is more of a facilitator. The instructor also was drawn into spending class lecture time dealing with Blackboard technical issues. This included dealing with outages, sign on problems, missing links, and other related technological issues.

Finally, even the best-laid plans are sometimes impacted by unanticipated technological glitches. In the development of the research methods course, the final exam did not initially function properly within Blackboard. This seemingly minor problem took two hours to evaluate, solve, and provide assurance that the exam would work properly.

Assessment and Evaluation

Overview. The development and final implementation of any course must include some form of evaluation of the student. For NCATE accredited schools (such as the LU School of Education) there is a required assessment called the Benchmark Assignment with a grading rubric. Thus the assessment and evaluation of the student for the research methods course at LU consists of three major components: (a) Benchmark assessments of the written proposal, (b) Assessment for concept and content knowledge, and (c) Assessment of writing in the discussion boards. The description and importance to the development process is provided below.

Student Assessments

The student assessments tools and setup were similar for both the resident and distance course. Each module contained a 15-20 question multiple-choice format Blackboard-based quiz. Quizzes were carefully constructed and used as a teaching tool in the following manner. Students were instructed that the questions for the module quizzes focus on key module concepts presented in the module exercises related to the textbook assigned readings and exercises. Quizzes were scored by Blackboard and the students were given the correct answers via Blackboard. In addition, the quizzes were made available for future study for the final exam. The final exam consisted of a random selection of questions from the eight module quizzes. Each quiz item also contained an explanation as to why a particular stem was the correct response.

Second, students were evaluated on their writing and analytical skills. This occurred in two separate assignments a total of five times (threaded discussions and the dissertation proposal). In addition, evaluation of the writing skills for the dissertation proposal was evaluated. This was accomplished in a specific manner during the grading

of the dissertation proposal. The dissertation proposal was considered to be the "Big Picture" element of the course and was assessed as the Benchmark Assignment. The methodology for assessing the Benchmark Assignment was found in the grading rubric (See Appendix A).

Since grading of student writing is considered an essential component of distance education, it seems logical that every avenue for improvement of this assessment mode be explored. The book Automatic Essay Scoring: A Cross-Disciplinary Perspective *by Mark Shermis and Jill Burstein* is a review of the strengths and weaknesses of several AES systems *(Wang, 2005, p. 105).*

The student assessment during the developmental and implementation phases of both the residential and distance courses was a major consumer of instructor time. Specifically, a major evaluation/assessment (developmental phase) time related issue that surfaced was the amount of time required to put the quizzes and the final exam into Blackboard format and to get them into working order. Blackboard issues related to test taking was a frustration for both the students and the instructor.

In particular, during the developmental phase it was discovered that there are no shortcuts to entering quiz and test questions. They must be manually entered one at a time. Blackboard currently does not have capabilities of accepting uploads from work documents and or scans in the testing module.

Discussion/Conclusions

Our time working with the developmental process for dual delivery of a research methods course proved to be successful. The step-by-step process supplied a reasonable framework that may prove to be useful for other educators facing similar course development issues.

Our experience also shed light on some specific awareness issues for college educators and university administrators. Among these is the inordinate amount of time needed to develop a single distance course. From our perspective it is imperative that college administrators not only become cognizant of this, but they also develop policies and plans which take this issue into account, especially if quality of content and design is a priority.

Since the content of the two formats are to be similar due to accreditation regulations, college administrators need to provide adequate resources, training, and time for college faculty and related personnel to deal with these issues. The development of a distance course while teaching in a resident format proved to be both fruitful and useful in meeting some of these challenges. However, adequate funding for graduate assistants and Blackboard experts also need to be considered as priority.

Our experience also sharpened our thinking and skills related to teaching in a distance format. Attempting to find ways to induce the students into the research culture in a distance format was challenging. This issue can be addressed on a limited basis in a discussion board format, however, further work and advancement is needed in this arena.

Preparing students to write a research proposal (the Big Picture) is a content-rich process that is often presented in methodology textbooks as a cookbook type of task. This portion of the dual format courses lends itself well to both the face-face and distance format where a textbook is used. However, we found that there are several related issues that should be addressed. Among these are: (a) the lack of immediate feedback that is present in the face-to face resident program but can be lacking in the distance format, (b) the need to provide adequate feedback on written work, and (c) the inordinate amount of time required by the professor provide this feedback .

Regarding immediate feedback, *Smith et al. (2003),* state that it is important for the instructor to deal with the lack of immediate student feedback in the distance format. In the resident course this may be accomplished through numerous techniques such as many miniature assignments, student questions, and/or instructional activities with peer interaction in the resident course.

We found the threaded discussion to be at least adequate for addressing the immediate feedback issue in the distance format. This tool lends itself well to use in the research course regarding the development of the statement of the problem. For this aspect of the distance course students post their particular problem statement and an opportunity for both for their peers and the professor to react is presented.

Although the threaded discussion format does not provide immediate feedback it has some positives that are not present in the residential format. First, it allows the professor time to react to the problem statement. This time can be spent wisely and the professor can construct a well thought out reply. This is not always the case in an in-class impromptu residential setting. Second, the threaded discussion gives a permanent record that can be reviewed and used for study and analysis. Again, this is not the case in the residential setting where the verbal exchanges, are at the worst, completely lost or, at the best, memory-dependent with incomplete recall issues.

One potential solution to some aspects of the time problem may be addressed by use of the *Automatic Essay Scoring (AES) system.* Further research should be conducted regarding the use of such an assessment tool in relationship to grading the final student written work and discussion boards of the distance course. We suggest that software developers give consideration to developing programs that will assist the educator in the

evaluation of discussion boards and other related internet media. Such tools could provide powerful and useful assistance in the development of skilled educational writers.

In conclusion, the overall experience of developing a research methods course in two different formats was found to be fruitful, challenging and enlightening. One of the most important lessons learned was that such a task is very time consuming, requiring much hard work. We recommend for those who are thinking about tackling such an endeavor to count the cost first, making sure there is adequate time and resources to complete the task in a timely, high quality, and professional manner. After all, students deserve our best efforts.

From our perspective, we encourage all who would embark on the endeavor of distance course development to remember-finishing is better than starting and thus one should be well aware of the time requirements. It is our hope that we have provided some helpful assistance for those who choose to venture into the realm of distance education course development.

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students at a distance. *Distance Education, 25* (1), 125-142.

Annotated Bibliography

This annotated bibliography is focused on the usefulness of the citations for the purposes of the "Quantitative and Qualitative Research" course as described in the article. The course described in the article must fit into an 8-week time frame thus the length and number of chapters for the textbook was an important consideration. Therefore chapter and page numbers (total content pages) are included at the end of each annotation.

Agresti, A. & Finlay, B. (1997). *Statistical methods for social science (3rd ed.).*   Upper
        Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.

This is an excellent supplemental text, which broadens the perspective from educational to the social sciences realm. It is SAS based rather than SPSS. It is more statistics than methods and thus does not fit well for a more methods-based course.

Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating
        quantitative and qualitative research (2nd ed).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson
        Education.

Denscombe, M. (2003). *The good research guide: For small scale social research
        projects (2nd ed.).*   Open University Press.

Excellent supplement in the social science realm with sections on strategies for social research, methods on social research and analysis. Limited scope to the social research makes it inappropriate for the main text for an educational research methods course. 301 pages/15 chapters.

Fraenkel, J. R. & Wallen, N. E. (2006). *How to design and evaluate research in education (6th ed.).* McGraw Hill Higher Education.

Well-done textbook with exercises at the end of each chapter, good summaries. Main drawback is the length and number of chapters. Lacked answers to exercises. Coverage of relevant topics was more than adequate. 620 pages/24 chapters.

Gall, M. D., Borg, W. R., & Gall, J. P. (1996). *Educational research: An introduction (6th ed.).* NY: Longman.

Well-done textbook with exercises at the end of each chapter, however lacks chapter summaries. Main drawback is the length and number of chapters. This was the text used at LU in the course when it was in the 16-week format. This text is used in many graduate schools across the country. Coverage of relevant topics was more than adequate. 723 pages/17 chapters.

Gay, L. R. & Airasian, P. (2003). *Educational research: competencies for analysis and applications (7th ed.).* Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

The main strength of this text appears to be the explanation of approaches to research with a good explanation of the difference between qualitative and quantitative research. The organization and flow are also a strength. Weaknesses are found in the student tasks, which often went beyond the material in the chapter and did not match the chapter content. Cost of text with SPSS student version is about $112. Total pages 540.

Hunter, J. E. & Schmidt, F. L. (2004). *Methods of meta-analysis: Correcting error and bias in research findings (2nd).* Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications.

This is an important supplemental book for a beginning doctoral research methods course and it contains an important and relevant discussion on problems with statistical

significance tests and the importance of the use of confidence intervals in addition to

significance tests for peer reviewed published articles. 582 pages/14 chapters.

Jalongo, M. R., Grelach, G. J., & Yan, W. (Eds.). (2001-2002). *Annual editions:*

   Research methods. Guildford, Ct: McGraw-Hill/Dushkin.

This compilation of recent articles on research methods is a valuable text for supplement

to any research methods course. It contains thirty-two carefully selected articles placed

into relevant research topics related to methodology. It also contains an important and

useful selection of World Wide Web Sites that are an excellent supplement and add value

to a research course. These thirty-three websites are divided into the following

categories: 1) General Sources, 2) Research, Nature, Purposes, and Basic Concepts, 3)

The Researcher /Practitioner: Standards and Ethics of Practice, 4) Research Beginnings:

Theoretical Bases and Question Formulation, 5) Research Means: Collecting and

Interpreting Data, 6) Research Ways: Categories of and Approaches to Research, 7)

Research Ends: Reporting Research, 8) Research Aims: Improving Professional Practice

(p. 4-5). These web sites provide the students with an invaluable source of information

for the purpose of writing the methodology section of a research proposal.

It also: 1) Keeps the students abreast of a number of research methods topics, 2) Provides

the student greater depth on certain topics that are not adequately covered in the Ary

textbook, 3) Provides the students with a view of methods that is beyond that of the more

generic textbook view, 4) Provides the student with a much broader perspective through

multiple authors, and 5) Provides the students with a conceptual view of research

methodology that gives a traditional view of research methodology courses as taught

across the country.

Leedy, O. D. & Ormond, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and Design (8th*

ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education.

Milinki, A. K. (1999). *Cases in qualitative research: Research reports for discussion*

and evaluation. Los Angeles: Pyrczak Publishing.

Wiseman, D. C. (1999). *Research strategies for education.* Belmont CA: Wadsworth

Publishing Company.

An interesting text with ample exercises and chapter summaries. One drawback is the

copyright date and the fact that there is not a second edition. 506 pages/14 chapters.

Appendix A

Grading Rubric for Benchmark Assignment

The grading rubric listed below will be used to assess the Benchmark assignment. The student is encouraged to look carefully at the rubric in an effort to ascertain the important components of the assessment. The "Benchmark Assignment" is the Writing of a Research Proposal. The most likely type of proposal is "quantitative" and should be developed from the readings and understanding of the course material.

For the Quantitative study the following items are required and rated. All six elements with the subtopics must be present. Each bold item will be rated on the following scale.

a. Excellent b. Average c. Below Average   d. Not Acceptable

Note the following:
Each of the six element categories are valued at 20 points. The point scale is found in the syllabus.

- ❖ Two or more "not acceptable" ratings requires a rewrite. This will require a student extension on the class.
- ❖ Two or more "below average" ratings indicate that the student would have a difficult time getting this particular proposal to pass successfully through a committee.
- ❖ The review of literature is rated on the second rubric.
- ❖ The entire paper is rated on the second rubric in terms of grammar and APA style.

A literature review is conducted by reviewing current journal articles, books, and Internet sources related to a particular topic. The Doctoral level review of literature (for a proposal) should contain all of the elements of *Bloom's Taxonomy*. There should be ample evidence of synthesis, analysis, and evaluation along with a clear demonstration of understanding of the process involved in the preparation and production of the literature review. Also the entire proposal must demonstrate the understanding that it is more than the standard undergraduate or graduate research paper.

APA Format

Samples related to the APA format are found in the *course documents* section of Blackboard. There are many examples given there. A few things to note would be:

1. The list of references at the end of the document is titled "References."
2. In a reference list underlining is not used.
3. The words in the titles of a journal article or a book are not capitalized (except for the first word, proper nouns, and the first word following a colon).

4. In-text citations are necessary and the APA format followed. An in text citation must have a corresponding reference in the reference list. Thus do not give a reference in the reference list at the end of the paper unless it contains a corresponding in-text citation.
5. APA format is required in all SOE graduate courses.

An essential checklist for Graduate level Writing Projects

Ask yourself the following questions:

- Did you use topical headings? These should come from your notes or outline developed before you begin writing. An outline is essential. I do not need to see it, however you need to do it.
- Does all that is written under each topical heading pertain to the topic?
- Does each sentence in each paragraph relate to the topic sentence of the paragraph?
- Do all sentences connect smoothly? Disjointed sentences are bad news.
- Did you check grammar and spelling? Misspelled words lower your grade.
- Did you proofread your paper?
- Did you have someone else read your paper before submission?
- Do all of the reference list and the in text citations match?
- Did you follow the APA style for title page, table of contents and abstract?
- Did you write with clarity? Short sentences that connect to one another are best.
- Did you avoid jargon?
- Did you use Bloom's Taxonomy and develop the higher levels of thinking within the paper?
- Did you adequately answer your question (or problem) that you set out to answer or solve?
- Did you turn your topic into a question of some sort to use as a guide?
- Does all that you wrote relate to the topic (question)? Digressions and filler are bad news.
- Did you check your sentences? There should not be any run-on or awkward sentences. Graduate students are expected to write with clarity and correct grammar.
- Did you check for correct paragraphing?

	Excellent	Average	Below Average	Not Acceptable

Required Elements
1. Introduction
   a. Statement of the Problem
   b. Review of Literature
   c. Statement of the Hypothesis

2. Methodology
   a. Subjects
   b. Instruments
   c. Procedures

3. Analysis of data
   a. Data Organization
   b. Statistical Procedures

4. Significance of the study
   a. Implications
   b. Applications

5. Time Schedule and Budget
   a. Time schedule
   b. Budget

6. References

	Excellent	Average	Below Average	Not Acceptable

Evidence of useage of Blooms's higher levels in the review of literature	*Synthesis*	*Analysis*	*Evaluation*	*Grading indicator used to indicate an issue in the paper*	*Element # in rubric* 1B
	Synthesis of the Major concepts related to topic is evident	Analysis of the topic under consideration is evident	Evaluation of the topic is evident		*1B*
	Synthesis of the Major concept is not evident	Analysis of the topic under consideration is not evident	Evaluation of the topic is not evident		*1B*
APA Format *References*	*References are labeled correctly*	*References are not labeled correctly*			*6*
Reference format	*All references show use of correct capitalization*	*All references do not show correct usage of capitalization*			*6*
Reference form	*All references show APA form*	*All references do not show APA form*			*6*
In text Citations	*All in text citations use APA style*	*All in text citations do not use APA style*			*All*
In text Citations and References correspond	*For every in text citation there is a reference*	*For every in text citation there is not a reference*			*All*
Grammar usage	*No problems*	*1-2 problems*	*3 or more*	*GU*	*All*
Topical Headings	*Present*	*Absent*		*NTH*	*All*
Topical Headings used as guides for writing	*Present*	*Absent*		*THNUG*	*All*
Spelling	*No words misspelled*	*1-2 mispelled*	*3 or more*	*S*	*All*
Paragraphing	*Proper Paragraphing used*	*Proper paragraphing not used*		*PPNU*	*All*
Jargon	*No jargon present*	*Jargon present*		*J*	*All*
Filler	*No filler*	*Filler used*		*F*	*All*
Sentence structure and Sentence connection	*No Sentence structure problems*	*1-2 sentence structure problems*	*3 or more sentence structure problems*	*SS*	*All*