

An Introductory Research Methodology Course Template for Advanced Standing MSW Programs With Thesis Option

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Abstract: *The Advanced Standing Master of Social Work (AS-MSW) option allows students with a bachelor's of social work degree to save time, effort, and money on education. However, AS-MSW programs that require the completion of a thesis for graduation may seem overwhelming due to (a) time constraints and (b) students' reluctance to learn research. To address these burdens and facilitate a smooth transition from baccalaureate to graduate education, this paper proposes a 12-week research methodology template for writing the first three chapters of a thesis: problem formulation, literature review, and methodology. This research template could be one of the bridge courses that AS-MSW students would take, preferably during summer terms. This conceptual paper carries implications for social work education and research since the existing literature largely ignores the mechanisms of the thesis option for AS-MSW programs. Social work faculty can utilize this course template to help their students build confidence vis-à-vis research.*

Keywords: *Advanced standing master of social work, bridge social work courses, research anxiety, research methodology, social work education, educational justice*

In social work education, the term *advanced standing* (AS) refers to the streamlined, cost-effective, research-supported channel through which bachelor of social work (BSW)-holding students can earn the master of social work degree (MSW) in one year or less. Students receive credits for the foundation year and are granted admission into the concentration or advanced year, hence the name. By eliminating coursework redundancy between baccalaureate and master curricula, the AS-MSW path allows students to save time and money on graduate education (Anderson, 1978; Bremner & Zastrow, 2008). This is, arguably, a form of educational justice.

The Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) was formally established in 1952 with the goal of addressing enrollment concerns related to a lack of accreditation in social work education (CSWE, 2021a). Yet, in the first two decades that followed its launch, the CSWE only accredited MSW programs (CSWE, 2021b). However, the expansion of social welfare programs under the Johnson administration in the late 1960s triggered a need for undergraduate social service professionals (Bremner & Zastrow, 2008). This, in turn, led to the creation of the CSWE-accredited baccalaureate social work degree in 1974 (Kendall, 2002).

Soon after, social work scholars, researchers, and administrators started to embrace the AS philosophy. Their advocacy, grounded in research (Ammons, 1975; Anderson, 1978; Eades, 1976; Schlesinger & Wolock, 1974), resulted in significant changes within social work education. In effect, the CSWE approved the AS-MSW option in March 1976 (CSWE, 1976). Two years later, social work programs welcomed the first cohort of advanced standing students (Kendall, 2002). Since then, social work schools across the

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United States have increasingly opted for the AS-MSW track (Anderson, 1978; Bremner & Zastrow, 2008; Noble & Hepler, 1990). Today, hundreds of universities offer such a track via both online and on-campus formats.

It is important to mention that the AS-MSW option is more popular in the United States than anywhere else in the world. Next is Canada where many top universities (e.g., University of Toronto, University of British Columbia, University of Windsor, McGill University, and York University) also offer AS-MSWs. However, beyond North America, the AS-MSW option is relatively rare, even across countries where social work is considered a mainstream profession (e.g., United Kingdom and Australia). Universities that offer AS-MSWs tend to follow the American model, which consists in roughly a one-year coursework preceded by some bridge courses.

In terms of empirical support, research has consistently demonstrated no statistically significant differences between AS-MSW students and traditional MSW students with regard to various outcomes. These include—but are not limited to—cognitive abilities, skills, and values (Schlesinger & Wolock, 1974), assessment / interviewing skills (Carrillo & Thyer, 1994), field performance (Cummings et al., 2015; Knight, 1993), substance use knowledge (Jani et al., 2009), overall knowledge, attitude, and skills (Kadushin & Kelling, 1977), research knowledge (Charles et al., 2019), and employment history (Richman & Rosenfeld, 1988). However, Bremner and Zastrow (2008) found that lack of social work experience and heterogeneity of the undergraduate curriculum are two major limitations associated with the AS path. These limitations posed challenges vis-à-vis the placement of students in the advanced year. As a result, most AS-MSW programs provide bridge courses to facilitate a smoother transition into graduate education (Bogo et al., 2017; Bragg et al., 2020; GlenMaye et al., 2010; Kourgiantakis et al., 2022).

For AS-MSW programs that focus on clinical social work, bridge courses may not include research methods. However, those that require the completion of a thesis or research project for graduation are likely to mandate a bridge research methodology course. Such a mandate could be daunting to newly BSW graduates, primarily due to (a) time constraints and (b) lack of interest for research in the first place. In fact, completing a thesis in one year could be overwhelming for students who are not comfortable with research. It has been demonstrated that research anxiety is a force that has dominated students from all backgrounds, across many disciplines, and in various places (Anwar et al., 2004; Baus & Welch, 2008; Kracker, 2002; Lane et al., 2004; Pan & Tang, 2005; Papanastasiou & Zembylas, 2008; Payne & Israel, 2010; Sloan, 2010; Vitasari et al., 2010). Social work students have been particularly reluctant to research (Adam et al., 2004; Davis, 2004; Dodd & Epstein, 2012; Einbinder, 2014; Epstein, 1987; Gredig & Bartelsen-Raemy, 2018; Harder, 2010; Macke & Tapp, 2012; Maschi, 2013). These students have reported research-related anxiety to a higher degree than have their counterparts in other professions (Green et al., 2001; Royle & Rompf, 1992).

Purpose, Rationale, and Significance

To address these burdens (time constraints and research anxiety/reluctance), this paper proposes a 12-week research methodology course template for AS-MSW programs with

thesis option. The goal is to help students prepare themselves for the rigor of research in graduate education. This research template could be one of the bridge courses that AS-MSW students would take, preferably during summer terms. In general, a master's thesis or research project includes five chapters in the following order: problem formulation, literature review, methodology, results, and discussion. At the end of this 12-week research course, students will submit a preliminary research proposal consisting of roughly the first three chapters of the master's thesis or research project.

Because the literature largely ignores the mechanisms of the thesis option for AS-MSW programs, this paper contributes to the social work scholarship. Moreover, this paper has implications for social work education by suggesting reasonable steps instructors and students can take to overcome challenges associated with bridge research courses. Furthermore, this paper carries significance for research, as the assumptions of the proposed course template can be empirically tested. Hence, social work educators and researchers can directly implement this research methodology course and evaluate its merits.

The 12-Week Research Methodology Course Template

Table 1 highlights the anticipated weekly activities and assignments for the 12-week bridge research course. One could classify the information in Table 1 into three main sections. Section I covers Weeks 1-4; Section II extends to Weeks 5-8; and section III reflects the activities in Weeks 9-12. These three sections correspondent to the first three chapters of the research thesis/project: problem formulation, literature review, and methodology. The following paragraphs provide a more in-depth description of the activities, learning objectives, and assignments anticipated for each of the sections.

Table 1. *12-Week Introductory Research Methodology Course Template for Advanced Standing Master of Social Work Programs With Thesis Option*

Course Activities		Assignments Due
Section I (Weeks 1-4): Problem Formulation		
Week 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Overviewing the course materials, assignments, & policies ➤ Performing a syllabus reconnaissance ➤ Previewing the master of social work research sequence ➤ Developing understanding of the purpose of research in social work ➤ Catching up with the 7th edition of APA manual 	None
Week 2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formulating the problem statement for research purposes—Part I: Capturing the scope & impact of major local, national, & international social problems ➤ Identifying social problems ➤ Using visualization tools to report incidence & prevalence of social problems ➤ Developing understanding of the multifaceted causes & impact of social problems 	Short Problem Paper
Week 3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Formulating a problem statement for research purposes—Part II: Developing understanding of the apparatus of macro interventions to major local, national, & international social problems ➤ Summarizing existing federal & state legislative responses to social problems ➤ Synthesizing existing interventions aimed at addressing and/or preventing social problems 	Short Intervention Paper

	Course Activities	Assignments Due
Week 4	Formulating a problem statement for research purposes—Part III: Understanding purpose, rationale & significance of research ➤ Formulating a good preliminary research question ➤ Linking research proposal to social work ethics ➤ Determining implications/significance of research for social work	Draft of Chapter 1: Problem Formulation
Section II (Weeks 5-8): Literature Review		
Week 5	Conducting a review of the literature for research purposes—Part I: Navigating electronic libraries & resources & gathering relevant materials ➤ Determining the importance of topic selection & research project title ➤ Locating relevant peer-reviewed materials through Boolean, truncation, & wildcard search operators ➤ Creating a research summary grid for relevant peer-reviewed materials ➤ Starting an annotated bibliography	None
Week 6	Conducting a review of the literature for research purposes—Part II: Applying critical thinking in reviewing the literature ➤ Conducting a deep analysis of articles in the research grid ➤ Analyzing quantitative research literature ➤ Analyzing qualitative research literature ➤ Continuing with the annotated bibliography	Short Annotated Bibliography
Week 7	Conducting a review of the literature for research purposes—Part III: Developing understanding of trends & patterns as well as limitations of existing literature ➤ Synthesizing relevant materials from the literature ➤ Identifying gaps in the literature ➤ Refining research question to address scholarship gaps	None
Week 8	Conducting a review of the literature for research purposes—Part IV: Developing understanding of the importance of theories for research ➤ Linking social work theories to micro, mezzo, or macro problems & interventions ➤ Analyzing merits & shortcomings of social work theories that inform micro, mezzo, & macro practice	Draft of Chapter 2: Literature Review
Section III (Weeks 9-12): Methodology		
Week 09	Writing the methods section of a research proposal—Part I: Overviewing research paradigms, approaches, & designs) ➤ Establishing similarities & differences among theoretical paradigms of inquiry (positivism, post-positivism, constructivism, & critical theory) ➤ Establishing similarities & differences among research methods approaches (quantitative, qualitative, mixed-methods, & action) ➤ Differentiating among research designs (exploratory vs explanatory vs descriptive; non-experimental vs pre-experimental vs quasi-experimental vs experimental; longitudinal vs cross-sectional; correlational vs causal; etc.)	Short Paper on Research Design
Week 10	Writing the methods section of a research proposal—Part II: Developing understanding of sampling & measurement in research ➤ Differentiating the probability sampling methods from the non-probability sampling methods ➤ Determining sample sizes for qualitative & quantitative research ➤ Determining participant inclusion & exclusion criteria ➤ Identifying or creating research instruments & understanding their validity & reliability	Short Paper on Research Sampling

Course Activities		Assignments Due
Week 11	Writing the methods section of a research proposal—Part III: Developing understanding of other important elements of the methodology section ➤ Exploring various data collection procedures ➤ Complying with research ethics/protection of human subjects ➤ Defining types of study variables & sensitizing concepts ➤ Differentiating between the null & the alternative hypotheses	Short Paper on Data Collection Instruments & Procedures
Week 12	Writing the methods section of a research proposal—Part IV (Putting sections together) ➤ Research designs ➤ Sampling methods & sample ➤ Data collection instruments & procedures ➤ Research ethics/protection of human subjects ➤ Study variables & sensitizing concepts ➤ Study hypotheses, if applicable	Preliminary Research Proposal: Chapters 1-3

Section I (Weeks 1-4): Problem Formulation

Weeks 1-4 expose students to major local, national, and international social problems such as immigration, substance use/addiction, mass incarceration, underperforming schools, child maltreatment, domestic violence, lack of access to healthcare, lack of mental health services, poverty and income inequality, food insecurity, parentification, mass shootings, police brutality, etcetera. Students understand the scope of social problems, report their incidence and prevalence via visualization tools, and describe their multifaceted causes and impact on society. Students also interpret existing legislative responses and/or existing interventions aimed at addressing or preventing social problems. Moreover, students write a good preliminary research question, connect research to social work ethics, and determine implications and significance of research for social work.

Throughout the process of formulating the problem (Chapter 1), students comply with the professional writing rules and regulations promulgated in the seventh edition of the American Psychological Association (APA) manual. Some learning outcomes for Weeks 1-4 are as follows:

- 1) Develop competence in writing for the profession of social work.
- 2) Demonstrate understanding of major challenges or problems that affect individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities locally, statewide, nationwide, or abroad.
- 3) Demonstrate understanding of the range of policy responses (historically and currently) to major challenges or problems that affect individuals, families, groups, organizations, and communities locally, statewide, nationwide, or abroad.
- 4) Recognize people's involvement with multiple systems in the social environment.
- 5) Identify knowledge, skills, and values necessary for the application of the generalist social work practice model.

Section II (Weeks 5-8): Literature Review

Weeks 5-8 prepare students for properly conducting a review of the literature for research purposes. Students master how to glean peer-refereed materials from web search engines and library databases, using Boolean search operators, truncation and wildcards. Students also learn how to organize relevant peer-reviewed materials for a raw annotated bibliography. Next, Weeks 5-8 introduce ways for students to conduct a deep analysis of relevant studies in the literature. Then, students apply critical thinking in synthesizing the existing literature and understanding trends and patterns as well as limitations of previous studies. Finally, students identify and critically evaluate theoretical perspectives that explain major social issues and/or those that guide major interventions. Weeks 5-8 culminate in a draft of Chapter 2 of the thesis/project. Below are potential learning outcomes for Weeks 5-8.

- 1) Develop competence in writing for the profession of social work.
- 2) Demonstrate understanding of the importance and role of research in social work practice, which goes beyond common sense, personal impressions, unsubstantiated generalizations and stereotypes.
- 3) Achieve a working understanding of the major issues that must be considered for a thorough review of the literature, including locating peer-reviewed articles, determining research trends and patterns, and identifying research gaps.
- 4) Link social work theories to major local, national, and international social problems and/or policy interventions.
- 5) Use critical thinking in the appraisal of social work theories.

Section III (Weeks 9-12): Methodology

From Week 9 to Week 12, students demonstrate understanding of theoretical paradigms of inquiry, establish similarities and differences among research methods approaches, and differentiate among research designs. Additionally, these weeks cover various topics that are germane to the methodology section of the paper (Chapter 3). These are sampling methods and measurement, data collection procedures, research ethics/protection of human subjects, study variables and/or sensitizing concepts, study hypotheses, and data analysis. By Week 12, students submit a preliminary proposal that encompasses the first three chapters of the thesis/research project: problem formulation, literature review, and methodology. The potential learning outcomes below are consistent with the theme of Weeks 9-12.

- 1) Develop competence in writing for the profession of social work.
- 2) Demonstrate understanding of the importance and role of research in social work practice, which goes beyond common sense, personal impressions, unsubstantiated generalizations and stereotypes.
- 3) Achieve a working understanding of the major issues that must be considered in the methodology section of a research proposal, including research design, sampling methods, data collection instruments, data collection procedures,

research ethics/protection of human subjects, study variables or sensitizing concepts, study hypotheses, and data analysis.

Assignments

This course is writing intensive with six short papers and three major papers. The short papers are due almost every week, while the major papers roughly every month. The short papers represent building blocks of the major papers. That is, the major papers are cumulative as is the proposal. More specifically,

- Major Paper 1 includes Short Papers 1 and 2,
- Major Paper 2 encompasses Short Papers 3 and 4, and
- Major Paper 3 contains materials discussed in Short Papers 5 and 6.

The three major papers form the research proposal itself. In teaching and learning, this approach is known as scaffolding of assignments. Research has shown that scaffolding increases student's motivation for and engagement in learning activities (Abraham & Jones, 2016; Acosta-Gonzaga & Ramirez-Arellano, 2022; Fisher & Justwan, 2018; Midun et al., 2020).

The six short papers are forms of formative assessment. Their goal is to show students' progression in the course. These papers should be graded (five points each) and treated as drafts. As Koh et al.'s (2019) research demonstrated, graded assignments improve students' performance. Moreover, the scaffolding literature emphasizes the importance of instructor feedback in formative assessment, as students are likely to improve in future assignments (Cobbold & Wright, 2021; Duckor & Holmberg, 2024; Johnson et al., 2019; Yin et al., 2024). The three major papers (formative assessment as well) can be worth 20 points each for a 60-point total. In other words, the proposal (six short papers and three major papers combined) is weighted at 90%. Reflecting a summative method of assessment, the proposal is due in the last week of the course. Instructors can allocate the remaining 10 points to civility in the course (attendance and participation).

Scholarly Support for this Course Template

The activities selected for this course are consistent with the literature on research proposal development. It is important for students to develop a good understanding of the syllabus. A well-designed syllabus promotes students' success and increases students' motivation (Wagner et al., 2023; Wheeler et al., 2019). The syllabus reconnaissance in Week 1 will allow students to make sense of the course content and requirements, and settle in smoothly. Meanwhile, the focus on the problem statement in Weeks 2-4 is of paramount importance. A good research project/thesis starts with the formulation of a problem. In other words, the problem statement is the foundation of research endeavors (Heron & Schwartz, 2007; McGaghie et al., 2001; Newman & Covrig, 2013; Srinivas et al., 2023). In writing the first chapter of the research project/thesis (problem formulation), students should ensure coherence among its many parts (Newman & Covrig, 2013).

In addition to the problem statement, the literature constitutes an integral part of a research project. The literature review allows researchers to accurately assess the state of the existing scholarship on a given topic. Rozas and Klein (2010) argued that the literature review helps identify patterns and gaps in the body of research on a subject. Many scholars and researchers recommend the inclusion of theories in theses/dissertations (Adams & Buetow, 2014; Akesson et al., 2018; Braganza et al., 2017). Weeks 5-8 of this proposed research methodology course provide students with an opportunity to critically locate and review relevant studies. These weeks also allow students to identify and critically analyze relevant theoretical frameworks.

The other fundamental section of a research proposal is the methodology (Annersten & Wredling, 2006; Attard, 2018; Denscombe, 2013). As perhaps the most complex block of a research proposal, the methodology requires care and concentration from researchers and makes a study replicable (Garg, 2016). According to Patel and Patel (2019), the methodology section of a research proposal is key in answering the question raised in the problem statement. This course template assigns four weeks (9-12) to the methodology segment. In general, data analysis is part of the methodology in a research proposal (Annersten & Wredling, 2006; Attard, 2018; Denscombe, 2013; Garg, 2016; Patel & Patel, 2019). However, this introductory course template does not cover data analysis. The next level research course is more suited to the analysis of collected data.

Meanwhile, the assignments in this course also reflect the contemporary literature on teaching and learning in higher education. As previously mentioned, this course involves several writing assignments to be completed throughout its duration. The short and major papers provide instructors an opportunity to evaluate students' progression and performance regarding the learning outcomes in the course. Culminating in a proposal, these papers mirror the literature on student evaluation. Formative and summative assessments are two broad scientific methods of evaluating students' success in a course (Yüksel & Gündüz, 2017). Research has shown that both of these methods of assessment are necessary for instructors to maintain consistency across the different blocks of a course (Glazer, 2014) and for students to achieve greater results in a course (Mahshanian et al., 2019). In this course, the short and major papers are consistent with the principles of formative assessment, while the proposal complies with the tenets of summative assessment.

Discussion

This conceptual paper presented an introductory research course template for AS-MSW programs that require a thesis or research project. Reflecting the existing literature, this course is designed as intensive, with students completing short writing assignments almost on a weekly basis. Instructors, on their part, are expected to provide students with timely (weekly) feedback on assignments. During the 12-week period, instructors should guide students toward taking full advantage of the course activities. In other words, students should use the coursework to craft their own research proposal. Research methods instructors should take remedial action as soon as possible if students do not perform as expected on assignments. Besides common remedial measures such as tutoring, mentoring,

making referral, instructors should contemplate pairing some students. It has been demonstrated that research partnership can reduce research-related anxiety among social work students (Harder, 2010; Macke & Tapp, 2012).

This course is also designed as a three-credit semester long learning endeavor. Under normal circumstances, this course should be delivered via face-to-face format. Ideally, the class would meet once a week during the summer term. However, in the event that the traditional delivery format is not possible, instructors should implement the course synchronously online, using a popular teleconference software such as Zoom or Microsoft Teams. The hybrid-course-delivery option should be deployed as a last resort. That is, the author would not recommend a fully online delivery method for this research course template. Neither will the author recommend a specific textbook for this course. Table 2 presents a list of potential reading materials that can be used on a weekly basis. Relatively dated, some of these materials are provided here for illustrative purposes only. Instructors should look for more contemporary literature on the topic.

Table 2. *Potential Weekly Resources for the Introductory Research Methodology Course*

Resources	
Week 1	The course syllabus
	American Psychological Association [APA]. (2019). <i>Sample student paper annotated</i> . Author.
	APA. (2020). <i>Student paper setup guide</i> . Author.
	Strydom, H. (2013). <i>An evaluation of the purposes of research in social work</i> . <i>Social Work/Maatskaplike Werk</i> , 49(2), 149-164.
Week 2	Witkin, S. L., & Harrison, W. D. (2001). <i>Whose evidence and for what purpose?</i> <i>Social Work</i> , 46(4), 293-296.
	APA. (2022). <i>Exploring the mental health effects of poverty, hunger, and homelessness on children and teens</i> . Author.
	Herbert Williams, J. (2016). <i>Grand challenges for social work: Research, practice, and education</i> . <i>Social Work Research</i> , 40(2), 67-70.
	United Nations. (n.d.). <i>Millennium Development Goals and beyond 2015</i> . Author.
	World Vision. (2023). <i>Global poverty: Facts, FAQs, and how to help</i> . Author.
Week 3	United States Department of Health and Human Services. (n.d.). <i>Poverty</i> . Author.
	Béland, D., & Waddan, A. (2019). <i>Unidentical twins: recent social policy developments in Canada and the United States</i> . <i>Journal of International and Comparative Social Policy</i> , 35(1), 1-4.
	Joseph, R. (2021). <i>The self-sufficiency framework—Revised: A full welfare/full work roadmap for poverty alleviation in contemporary social welfare systems</i> . <i>Journal of Poverty</i> , 28, 22-46.
	Monika Makay, M., & European Parliament. (2023). <i>The fight against poverty, social exclusion and discrimination</i> . European Parliament.
	United Nations. (n.d.). <i>Millennium Development Goals and beyond 2015</i> . Author.
Week 4	Doody, O., & Bailey, M. E. (2016). <i>Setting a research question, aim and objective</i> . <i>Nurse Researcher</i> , 23(4), 19-23.
	Evidence-Based Practice for the Helping Professions. (n.d.). <i>Posing a well-built COPES question and classifying it into one of five question types</i> (COPES Questions Summary). Brooks-Cole.
	International Federation of Social Workers. (2018). <i>Global social work statement of ethical principles</i> . Author.
	Newman, I., & Covrig, D. M. (2013). <i>Building consistency between title, problem statement, purpose, & research questions to improve the quality of research plans and reports</i> . <i>New Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development</i> , 25(1), 70-79.
	Thabane, L., Thomas, T., Ye, C., & Paul, J. (2009). <i>Posing the research question: Not so simple</i> . <i>Canadian Journal of Anesthesia/Journal Canadien D'Anesthésie</i> , 56(1), 71-79.

Resources

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| Week 5 | <p>Amaechi, C. V., Amaechi, E. C., Oyetunji, A. K., & Kgosiemang, I. M. (2022). <u>Scientific review and annotated bibliography of teaching in higher education academies on online learning: Adapting to the COVID-19 pandemic</u>. <i>Sustainability</i>, 14(19), 1-25.</p> <p>Habibzadeh, F., & Yadollahie, M. (2010). <u>Are shorter article titles more attractive for citations? Cross-sectional study of 22 scientific journals</u>. <i>Croatian Medical Journal</i>, 51(2), 165-170.</p> <p>Lei, S. A. (2009). <u>Strategies for finding and selecting an ideal thesis or dissertation topic: A review of literature</u>. <i>College Student Journal</i>, 43(4), 1324-1333.</p> <p>Paiva, C. E., Lima, J. P. D. S. N., & Paiva, B. S. R. (2012). <u>Articles with short titles describing the results are cited more often</u>. <i>Clinics</i>, 67(5), 509-513.</p> <p>University of Maryland Global Campus Library. (2021). <u>How to write an annotated bibliography - APA (7th Edition)</u> [Video].</p> |
| Week 6 | <p>Chui, H. T., Jackson, J. L., Liu, J., & Hill, C. E. (2012). Annotated bibliography of studies using consensual qualitative research. In C. E. Hill (Ed.), <i>Consensual qualitative research: A practical resource for investigating social science phenomena</i> (pp. 213-266). American Psychological Association.</p> <p>Offenhauer, P., & Buchalter, A. (2011, June). <u>Teen dating violence: A literature review and annotated bibliography</u>. Federal Research Division, Library of Congress.</p> <p>Shlonsky, A., & Gibbs, L. (2004). <u>Will the real evidence-based practice please stand up? Teaching the process of evidence-based practice to the helping professions</u>. <i>Brief Treatment & Crisis Intervention</i>, 4(2), 137-153.</p> |
| Week 7 | <p>de Oliveira, O. J., da Silva, F. F., Juliani, F., Barbosa, L. C. F. M., & Nunhes, T. V. (2019). <u>Bibliometric method for mapping the state-of-the-art and identifying research gaps and trends in literature: An essential instrument to support the development of scientific projects</u>. In S. Kunosic & E. Zerem (Eds.), <i>Scientific recent advances</i> (pp. 47-66). InTech Open.</p> <p>Miles, D. A. (2017, August). <u>A taxonomy of research gaps: Identifying and defining the seven research gaps</u>. Research Methods and Strategies Workshop.</p> <p>Müller-Bloch, C., & Kranz, J. (2015). <u>A framework for rigorously identifying research gaps in qualitative literature reviews</u>. Thirty Sixth International Conference on Information Systems. Rozas, L. W., & Klein, W. C. (2010). <u>The value and purpose of the traditional qualitative literature review</u>. <i>Journal of Evidence-Based Social Work</i>, 7(5), 387-399.</p> |
| Week 8 | <p>Adams, P. J., & Buetow, S. (2014). <u>The place of theory in assembling the central argument for a thesis or dissertation</u>. <i>Theory & Psychology</i>, 24(1), 93-110.</p> <p>Akesson, B., Braganza, M., & Root, J. (2018). <u>Is theory development essential for the social work dissertation?</u> <i>Social Work Education</i>, 37(2), 209-222.</p> <p>Braganza, M., Akesson, B., & Rothwell, D. (2017). <u>An empirical appraisal of Canadian doctoral dissertations using grounded theory: Implications for social work research and teaching</u>. <i>Journal of Teaching in Social Work</i>, 37(5), 528-548.</p> <p>Joseph, R., Herrera, I. D., & Doyle, K. (2022). <u>Determining the theoretical quality of the strengths perspective: A critical analysis</u>. <i>Journal of Family Strengths</i>, 20(1), 1-17.</p> |
| Week 9 | <p>Christenson, J. D., & Gutierrez, D. M. (2016). <u>Using qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods research to promote family therapy with adolescents in residential settings</u>. <i>Contemporary Family Therapy</i>, 38(1), 52-61.</p> <p>Cook, B. G., & Cook, L. (2016). <u>Research designs and special education research: Different designs address different questions</u>. <i>Learning Disabilities Research & Practice</i>, 31(4), 190-198.</p> <p>Holosko, M. J. (2010). <u>What types of designs are we using in social work research and evaluation?</u> <i>Research on Social Work Practice</i>, 20(6), 665-673.</p> <p>Rahi, S. (2017). <u>Research design and methods: A systematic review of research paradigms, sampling issues and instruments development</u>. <i>International Journal of Economics & Management Sciences</i>, 6(2), 1-5.</p> |

Resources

Week 10	<p>Bahariniya, S., Ezatiasar, M., & Madadzadeh, F. (2021). <u>A brief review of the types of validity and reliability of scales in medical research</u>. <i>Journal of Community Health Research</i>, 10(2), 100-102.</p> <p>Berndt, A. E. (2020). <u>Sampling methods</u>. <i>Journal of Human Lactation</i>, 36(2), 224-226.</p> <p>Coleman, P. (2022). <u>Validity and reliability within qualitative research for the caring sciences</u>. <i>International Journal of Caring Sciences</i>, 14(3), 2041-2045. https://www.internationaljournalofcaringsciences.org/docs/54_goleman_special_14_3.pdf</p> <p>Johnson, J. M., Bristow, D. N., & Schneider, K. C. (2004). <u>Did you not understand the question or not? An investigation of negatively worded questions in survey research</u>. <i>Journal of Applied Business Research (JABR)</i>, 20(1), 75-86.</p> <p>Noble, H., & Smith, J. (2015). <u>Issues of validity and reliability in qualitative research</u>. <i>Evidence-Based Nursing</i>, 18(2), 34-35.</p>
Week 11	<p>Anupama, K. (2018). <u>Hypothesis types and research</u>. <i>International Journal of Nursing Science Practice and Research</i>, 4(2), 78-80.</p> <p>Flannelly, L. T., Flannelly, K. J., & Jankowski, K. R. (2014). <u>Independent, dependent, and other variables in healthcare and chaplaincy research</u>. <i>Journal of Health Care Chaplaincy</i>, 20(4), 161-170.</p> <p>Flemmen, A. B. (2017). <u>Sensitizing concepts in action: Expanding the framework</u>. In Leiulfstrud, H., & Sohlberg, P. (Eds.), <i>Concepts in action</i> (pp. 79-94). Brill.</p> <p>Sobočan, A. M., Bertotti, T., & Strom-Gottfried, K. (2019). <u>Ethical considerations in social work research</u>. <i>European Journal of Social Work</i>, 22(5), 805-818.</p>
Week 12	No resources assigned.

This paper holds major implications for social work education by providing research methods instructors with a template to attenuate research anxiety in AS-MSW students. With proper guidance, AS students can complete a preliminary research proposal in 12 weeks. Under this scenario, these students would have the potential to transition smoothly into graduate school. Based on its learning outcomes expressed above, this course template covers all nine of CSWE's 2022 Educational Policy and Accreditation Standards (EPAS) competencies for baccalaureate and master's programs: social work ethics, diversity in practice, advancement of human rights, evidence-informed practice, policy practice, engagement, assessment, implementation, and evaluation (CSWE, 2022). This paper also extends the literature by covering an under-researched area in social work. Apart from Charles et al.'s (2019) comparative study and Kourgiantakis et al.'s (2022) teaching note, publications on AS-MSW programs largely predate the Covid-19 pandemic. Therefore, this paper, among other things, revives interest in the AS-MSW track. It should be noted that the course template presented and discussed throughout this work can be directly implemented and evaluated.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

While the author of this paper is optimistic about the potential success of this course template, it should be noted that without any data, it remains unknown whether this course would be effective or well-received. At this point, this course is purely an instructional framework, although one potentially grounded in field observations and scholarship.

Research methods instructors can use qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods strategies to evaluate the effectiveness of this course.

On the qualitative front, it is important for researchers to talk to students who complete the course. Their perspectives on the content, quality and implementation of the course can help researchers determine its merits and limitations. Through responses to open-ended questions, students can inform instructors about ways this course (or sections thereof) can be improved. To limit bias and conflict of interest, instructors of this course should refrain from interviewing students themselves. Instead, these instructors can seek help from colleagues with no relationship with students.

On the quantitative front, instructors can evaluate the effectiveness of the course, using scales that have reliability and validity reports. Likert-type scales and self-anchoring rating scales are examples of established instruments in the literature on measurement (Di Napoli & Arcidiacono, 2012; Hofmans et al., 2009; Kusmaryono et al., 2022; Van Acker & Theuns, 2024). Through the Likert scale, students can strongly disagree, disagree, neither agree nor disagree, agree, or strongly agree on the effectiveness of the course. The use of a scaling question can help determine to extent to which to course is effective. For example, researchers can ask this question: On a scale of 0 to 10—with 0 as the lowest score and 10 as the highest—how effective was this course? The same question can also apply to sections of the course (problem formulation, literature review, and methodology). Responses to this question will provide instructors with a clear idea of the potential success of the course.

The implementation of this course may pose some challenges for institutions. One potential issue is that full-time faculty are off contract for summer. Institutions should therefore plan to find suitable replacements, even though some full-time faculty do teach during summer. Additionally, budget constraints can be an issue to implement this course. In fact, despite their willingness, institutions facing budget restrictions may have difficulty offering this course in the first place. Furthermore, varying levels of research experience among students may represent a potential limitation associated with implementing the proposed course template.

Conclusion

This paper presented an overview of the AS-MSW option, explained research anxiety among students from various backgrounds, and proposed an introductory research course template for AS-MSW programs that require students to write a thesis or research project as part of the curriculum. The long-term goal here is to decrease nervousness among BSW-holding students who must write an entire research project or thesis for successful completion of their graduate social work education. The elements in this research methodology template are simply the author's opinion about how best to teach the course and thus should not be cast in stone. Therefore, social work educators and instructors can adjust the proposed course template based on their expertise and student needs.

Designed primarily for AS programs with thesis option, this course template may not be applicable beyond its scope. Yet research methods faculty may find the entire template

(or parts thereof) transferable to non-AS research courses. Since the existing literature largely ignores the thesis option among AS-MSW students, it is the author's hope that research methods faculty utilize this course template in the best possible ways. It is important for faculty to consider potential challenges or limitations associated with implementing the proposed course template, such as time constraints, resource limitations, or varying levels of research experience among students. The various evaluation techniques previously mentioned will allow instructors to corroborate or reject the claims made in this paper. In the meantime, this conceptual paper can serve as guide for a bridge social work research methodology course in various academic institutions in the United States and abroad.

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