

**ACADEMIC SUCCESS**  
**And**  
**WRITING STYLE GUIDE**

SUCCEEDING AS A GRADUATE STUDENT  
THE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION  
TRINITY (WASHINGTON) UNIVERSITY

(Edited – July 2006)

Trinity (Washington) University prepares educators who are grounded in theory, value reflective practice, use learner-centered pedagogy, and are committed to and affirm diversity.

## I Introduction

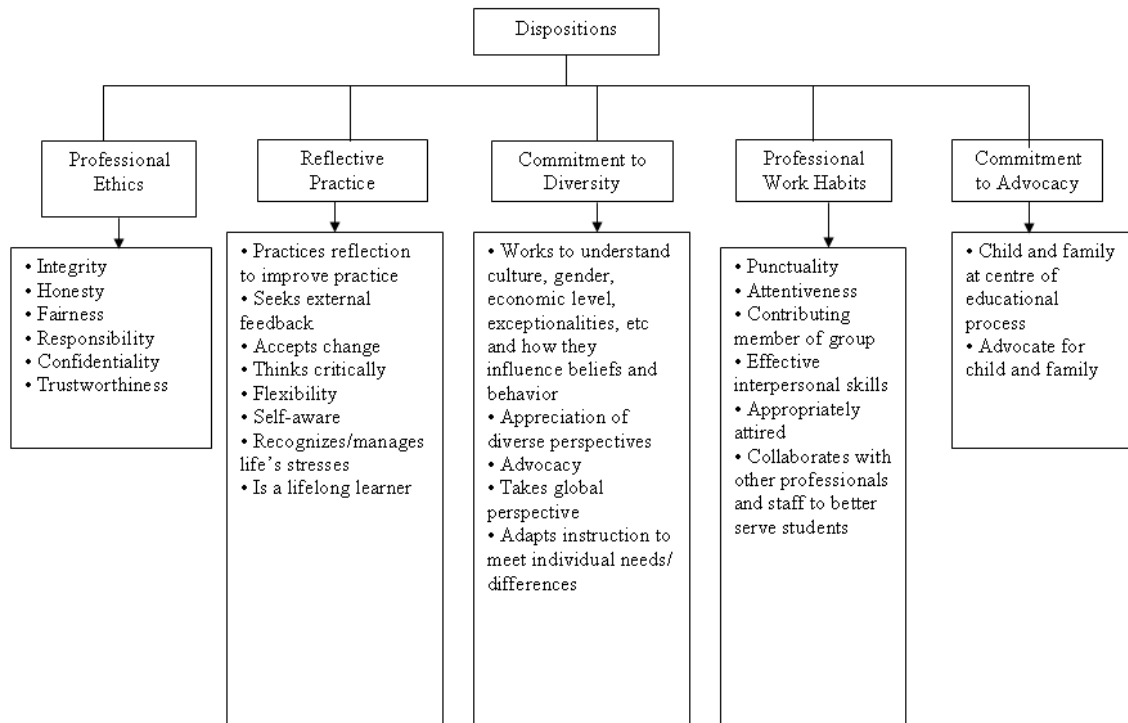
This guide was prepared to assist students in their transition into the School Education’s graduate programs. We drew upon faculty experience; information from *The Adult Learner’s Guide to College Success*, revised ed., (Smith, L.N. & Walter, T., 1990); the Trinity University Writing Center; and material provided in guides and manuals for graduate students at other universities. Please take the time to read it thoroughly and consider the suggestions carefully.

The Guide is in 8 sections.

## II. Ethical, Professional and Personal Responsibility

The Faculty of the School of Education (SOE) is committed to educating individuals to be professionally and ethically responsible. We are bound by the ethical principles of the education and counseling professions. The National Education Association’s code of ethics states, “...the educator... shall not assist any entry into the profession of a person known to be unqualified in respect to character, education, or other relevant attributes...”

Students will be held accountable in terms of their academic performance, interpersonal skills, and ethical behavior. Students are expected to demonstrate a positive attitude toward the learning process and towards the students, faculty, and administrators of the university. NCATE refers to these attributes as “dispositions.”



A student’s progress through the graduate program can be affected by demonstrations of poor academic performance and unethical/unprofessional behavior. Students are

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expected to have knowledge of the Retention Policy and the corresponding Review Process. This information can be found in the SOE Policy manual that can be found through the Trinity web page.

### **Professional Behavior**

- Professional behavior is always expected, which means, for example, cell-phones must be turned off during class, and that all communications with members of the Trinity community are polite and civil, even when one party feels angry or aggrieved.
- It should be a **rare** occasion that you arrive late to class.
- Professional courtesy requires students to let professors know when they will be late or will miss an appointment or a class. Such notification does not excuse the absence or tardiness, but is an expected professional courtesy.
- Faculty and staff from the University will only use Trinity email account to communicate with students.

### **III. Key University Policies**

#### **Remember the “five year rule.”**

Students have five years from the semester they started a graduate program to complete a degree.

#### **Communicating with Faculty.**

Never leave written correspondence/papers under a faculty member’s door. All full/part-time faculty have a mailbox on the first floor of Main by the Faculty Services Office (next to room 186). The room is locked; therefore, leave material in the **Red Box**. This box is in front of Room 186, and there are envelopes available. Address the envelope and just drop the envelope in the slot.

#### **Dropping or withdrawing from a class.**

If you stop going to class but did not go through the official drop/withdrawal process, you will still be charged for the course and may receive a failing grade. You also must pay attention to the deadlines for dropping and withdrawing from a course. This information can be found on the Trinity Web-page and the semester course booklet.

#### **Appeal of a grade.**

According to university policy, students may only appeal a grade of ‘C’ or below.

#### **Taking courses through the Consortium.**

Students may only take courses through the consortium under specific circumstances. See guidelines stated in the Academic Policy manual for the School of Education for more details.

#### **Trinity Honor System**

Graduate students are responsible for being aware of the Trinity University Academic Honesty Policy. (See *Academic Honesty, Plagiarism, and the Honor System: A*

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*Handbook for Students.*) Graduate students found guilty of plagiarism or other violations of the policy will be expelled, regardless of the intent. Faculty are obligated to report any suspected violation of the policy.

**All of the policies** are on the Trinity website. Read and understand them. Make note of any that affect you or may affect you in the future. **It is your responsibility to know them.**

#### **IV. Academic Planning and Advising**

Each graduate student is assigned a full-time faculty member as an academic advisor. Your academic advisor will work with you to develop your individual program of study and monitor your progress throughout your time at Trinity.

##### **Step 1: Know your advisor**

Know your faculty advisor's phone number, and where his/her office is located.

##### **Step 2: Assemble your academic advising file.**

Prepare for meeting by putting together all documents that you need. For your first planning meeting, you should bring the following:

- Course schedule booklet
- Any transcripts of graduate courses taken elsewhere
- Any notes from any previous sessions or meeting
- Writing material – pen/paper

##### **Step 3: Determine questions you should ask your advisor.**

- How do credits that you already earned in graduate courses/workshops fit into your program of study?
- Does my chosen field of study have any outside restrictions or requirements of which I should be aware? Are there specific certification requirements? How do “No Child Left Behind” and accreditation standards effect my course of study? Do I need to have a General Education review?
- Am I required to have internships, which may require me to take significant time off from work/home?
- Are there exams that I must take, and when must I take them?
- An example of initial academic advising sessions:
  - Discuss your goals
  - Develop a program of study
  - Confirm your program of study
  - Determine how often your faculty advisor needs to see you.

*After your first semester you can register on-line, and e-mail your advisor if you have any questions.*

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#### **Step 4: Develop a Graduation Plan.**

As you are developing your program of study, you are also developing a graduation plan. Make sure that you understand all graduation requirements. When you are planning your program of study, plan when you will take any needed general education classes. It is **your** responsibility to follow your program and keep up with requirements, maintain a file of all paper work, and be aware and follow all academic deadlines.

#### **Step 5: Choose Courses the Smart Way**

**Select** your course load. Do you have the time to take more than six credits?

**Select your mix** of classes. If your program allows for some flexibility in the sequence of courses, investigate the reading and writing assignments for your courses to ensure there is some balance in your workload.

➤ Do not overextend yourself. Grades are extremely important in graduate school. To make a ‘C’ is essentially failing the course.

**Step 6: Rest and Relaxation.** Allow time for recreation and sleep.

**Step 7: Time Plan.** Incorporate a time-management plan.

#### **Step 8: Refine Your Academic Plan Each Academic Year.**

Academic advising is an ongoing process, and “life happens.” Your program of study is fluid, which is why you may need to meet with your advisor to refine your plan at least each academic year.

## **V. Tips for Surviving and Thriving in Graduate School**

### **Acknowledge the Commitment**

Graduate school is a big commitment of time (and money). Recognize this and make allowances. Try not to take on other new commitments at this time. Think about what you could spend **less** time on (chatting on the phone? TV? shopping? going out?) to provide adequate time for studying and classes.

### **Plan Your Week**

Many graduate students report that their number one problem is TIME. One solution is to plan by the week. Planning a week at a time instead of one day at a time can give a more complete picture of the time you spend in your different roles (i.e., student, employee, and family member). Separate high priority tasks from lower priority tasks. Schedule specific time for the important items and stick to your schedule.

After planning your class schedule, and your weekly schedule, post your schedule in a place where others will see it. Make your schedule look like an “official” document.

### **Share Your Educational Plans with Family and Employers**

Returning to college will affect the relationships in your life. Committing to classes and studying may prompt feelings of guilt about taking time away from your loved one(s). You can prevent problems by discussing these issues ahead of time.

Ask the key people in your life for help. Ask them to think of ways they can support your success in college and to commit to those actions. Make education a joint mission

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that benefits everyone. Consider setting aside quiet time each day when the whole family does homework or reads.

Employers often promote continuing education. Furthering your education increases your skills in either a specialized area or working effectively with people. This skill makes you a more valuable employee or consultant. If appropriate, share your educational plan with your employer; point out how skills gained in class help meet work objectives and requirements. Share your class schedule with your employer. Make sure your employer understands the need for you to come to class on time. and allows you to leave early on the days you have classes.

*Make sure that you have read the Emergency Procedures for Trinity and you have shared this information with the appropriate family members. These procedures can be accessed through the Trinity University home page.*

### **Prepare for an Academic Environment**

Knowing and learning the rhythm of academic life will help alleviate frustration, suspense, and stress. For example, faculty members may take a little longer to return your calls or respond to your e-mails, especially during holidays, and summer breaks. Expect these delays and do not feel ignored. On the other hand, if you do not hear back after a few days during the Fall or Spring semesters, try again. One misplaced letter can send an email into no man's land.

### **Let Go of Old Ineffective Study Habits**

Going to school while working and/or caring for a family demands a more disciplined, proactive approach to studying and completing assignments than many of us used when we were undergraduates. Many graduate students find it effective to view their assignments exactly as they would a project at work. They use the same tactics in the library as on the job, which often helps them learn more actively. Also, make sure that you learn to use technology effectively to help you in completing your assignments.

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### **Review Your Course Requirements Before Starting Classes**

Most graduate courses are “writing intensive.” If you have not taken a writing course since undergraduate school, consider brushing up on your writing skills before classes begin because students are required to write at a scholarly level.

### **Plan Your Semester’s Work**

Many classes have assignments requiring fieldwork and you will need to make arrangements in advance with teachers, counselors, administrators, or families. In addition, many assignments are projects containing multiple components that must be completed in sequence. If you wait until the semester is half over before beginning one of these multi-part projects, you may find it already too late to do a good job. Use “backwards mapping” to determine when each task must be completed. Then create a semester’s work schedule that includes **all** of your assignments, and **all** of the preliminary steps required to complete them, i.e. contacting a teacher to set up an observation time.

### **Get to Know Other Graduate Students**

Introduce yourself to other graduate students. Being in the same classroom and program creates an immediate bond. Exchange work and home telephone numbers and e-mail addresses with other students. Build a network of mutual support.

### **Get Extra Mileage Out of Your Current Tasks**

Look for specific ways to merge your work and college life. Your company/school may reimburse employees for some tuition costs or even grant time off to attend classes and pursue internship requirements.

Experiment with combining tasks. For example, when professors assign a research paper, choose a topic that relates to your current job tasks.

### **Investigate and use the Support Services on Campus**

Take advantage of the many support services on campus for graduate students (e.g., Computer Center, Writing Center, Library, Security and Safety services, Counseling and Health Center, Disability Services, and Career Counseling Services). Information about these services is on the Trinity home page and in the Student Handbook.

### **Tactics for Course Success**

- Meet students in class with whom you can share information and who can act as a support group.
- Create a written work plan for the semester (and stick to it.)
- When not taking notes, maintain eye contact with the instructor to communicate interest.
- Learn the names of all your professors.
- Make a concerted effort to sit toward the front in each class.
- Ask about course requirements at any time you have the least uncertainty; however, make sure you **read** the syllabus first.
- Read and reread the syllabus and directions for assignments.** Make it a practice to read and reread the instructions for an assignment before starting it. All too

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often students do poorly on an assignment because they do not read the instructions thoroughly and then do not provide what the instructor requested.

**SAVE, SAVE, SAVE.** Computers freeze and crash. Be proactive. Prevent heartache due to computer failures and save work frequently and in more than one place, i.e. not just to your computer's hard drive.

## **VI. Guidelines for Written Papers/Assignments**

As “reflective practitioners” and based on NCATE standards and the need for “qualified educators,” the faculty expects all students to demonstrate the ability to analyze and synthesize in their writing and to have command of the conventions of Standard written English. Students are expected to use APA (American Psychological Association) documentation style in all courses, and must acquire the *APA Publication Manual* and/or the APA pocket guide. These resource manuals can be found in the Trinity bookstore.

### **The Trinity Writing Center**

The Writing Consultants in the Center will help with basic writing issues. The consultants will not edit or write papers, but will assist students in improving their writing skills.

### **Presentation of Assignments**

All School of Education graduate students are expected to follow these guidelines (unless otherwise indicated by the instructor):

**Timeliness:** One copy of written assignment must be submitted by the due date as indicated in the course syllabus. Technical problems with the computer are not considered emergencies or justification for not turning a paper in by due date.

### **Format:**

- Papers must be word-processed on good quality paper, and printed on one side only.
- **Font and Margins:** Within the text of your assignment use Word, Times New Roman, 12 point, left-justified, double-spaced. Use 1” margins on the left, right, top, and bottom of each page. (this Guide uses these parameters)
- **Indentation:** For most writing assignments use normal paragraphs in which the first line is indented five characters (use tab key). There are exceptions – see pages 294-292 in the APA Manual (5th edition).
- **Punctuation Spacing:** Use one space after sentence terminators (period, question mark, exclamation mark), commas, colons, and semicolons; periods as part of reference citation; periods of initials in personal names. **EXCEPTION:** No spaces are used in abbreviations such as i.e., e.g., U.S., a.m., and colons used in ratios.
- Pages should be numbered with a staple through the top left corner. Do not place papers in folders, ring binders, **sheet protectors**, or plastic covers, unless specifically requested by instructor.

### **Cover Page and Layout:**

Do not put your name directly on your assignment. The first page is the cover or title page. A cover page should accompany each writing assignment. The cover page should consist of the following information:

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- Title of paper (assignment)
- Your name
- Course name and number
- Instructor's name
- Date submitted

## **VII. Writing & APA Style**

### **Assessment of Writing**

All written assignments will be assessed on the quality of the writing, the content, and the student's ability to analyze, critique, and demonstrate overall critical thinking skills.

Submitted papers must be grammatically correct, appropriately documented (APA), must use gender inclusive language, and be free of inappropriate jargon and slang. It is assumed by the instructor that students have taken the time to edit and proofread their papers. Some instructors, after finding a number of grammatical errors, may decide to give a student zero points on the assignment or the student may be given the opportunity to re-submit. Also, write in third person unless your instructor indicates that you should write in first person for a particular assignment.

### **Writing as a Process**

Writing any paper should not be a one shot deal. *Oftentimes, papers that receive poor grades are just drafts that have been proofread.*

**Prewriting:** Everything done before writing the first draft: researching, reading, brainstorming, thinking, outlining, and deciding on a provisional thesis.

**Drafting:** Writing the first draft. Usually done quite quickly and without stress

**Revising:** Developing revised drafts and making global revisions. This is where the "discovery" stage takes place. Unnecessary points in the first draft are cut out. Obvious or oft-repeated points in the first draft are dropped out. Interesting and revealing points in the first draft are given more research and development.

### **Allow for New Ideas as You Write:**

To approach writing as a process, have a provisional thesis or main point – one that is liable to change and improve as you revise and develop drafts. In that way, one is not locked into a thesis statement that was made up before drafting the paper and doing all of the research.

To approach writing as a process, it is better to save some of the research time for when revising the paper. As you come across new and interesting points to develop, you will have time to find information and specifics to back them up.

### **Common Writing Errors to Avoid**

Most graduate courses are "writing intensive." In writing at the graduate level, students need to be diligent in ensuring that they do not make the following errors:

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### **Run-On Paragraphs:**

If you write a paragraph that is a page long, or more than a page long, it might be a run-on paragraph. A run-on paragraph tries to cover more than one point or focus, and as a result it needs to be broken into two or more shorter paragraphs that are more focused and specific.

### **Positioning Language:**

Whenever you write, “in this essay the writer will...” (or similar comments) you are using unnecessary positioning language. Even using “In conclusion...” to introduce your conclusion is redundant. Do not use positioning language. Be direct and authoritative, not wordy and blunt.

### **“Little Old Me” Apologies:**

Most of the time when you use “I think” or “I believe” or “in my opinion” or “it’s my belief that” or related language, you are needlessly padding your language and harming the authority of your voice. It is much stronger to state your point directly: “Crime is a serious problem” instead of “I think crime is a serious problem.”

See <http://www.confusingwords.com/> for use of confusing words and clarification of homophones—effect/affect, peak/pique, it/it’s, there/their, could of/could have, etc.

## **Writing Assignment Guidelines using APA Style**

“APA style” is an editorial style that many of the social and behavioral sciences have adopted to reference written material in the field. Graduate students are expected to follow the APA documentation style in all writing assignments. Students should purchase the APA Manual (5<sup>th</sup> edition) and/or the APA Pocket Guide from the bookstore. There is also an on-line link to APA from the Trinity Library website. The APA information in this guide is only a summary, and students should always check the manual for specific information.

### **Making the APA Manual Your Friend**

The APA Publication Manual is to be used as a resource guide, it is not a book that you would sit down and try to read. However, you will need to become familiar with the contents of the manual. It is recommended that, as you review the manual, you create your own tabs on the parts of the book where you will be seeking information. Below is a suggested list of sections of the book that you might want to tab. The page numbers correspond to the paper bound manual.

### **Suggested tabs:**

Introduction – for major research papers (pp. 15-16)

Pronoun agreement – (p. 47)

Reducing Bias in language – (pp. 61-76)

Quotation marks – (pp. 82-83)

Headings – (pp. 111-115; 289-290)

Quotation of sources – (pp. 117-118; 292-293)

Omitting materials – ellipses (...) – (p. 119)

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Numbers – (pp. 122-130)

Reference Citations in Text – (pp. 207-214)

Reference List – (pp. 215-281)

APA reference style – non periodicals – (p. 223)

On-Line Document – (p. 223)

Retrieval information electronic sources – (p. 231)

Examples of references to periodicals: journal articles (p. 240)

Primary and Secondary sources – (p. 247)

Electronic Resources – (p. 268-281)

Page Numbering (p. 288)

Internet Article base on print source – (p. 273)

Order of Manuscript – (for capstone papers, and major research paper- (p. 287)

Spacing and Punctuation – (pp. 290-291)

Proofreaders Marks – (p. 337)

The APA information was furnished by the Trinity University Writing Center and Adrienne Hamcke Wicker at the University of Maryland who compiled the information from the official American Psychological Association website: <http://www.apastyle.org/>. See also Diana Hacker's "Research and Documentation online" website: <http://www.bedfordstmartins.com/hacker/resdoc/>.

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## **V111. The Graduate Student To Do List**

- Register for the next semester during the scheduled time to insure that the classes you want will be available.
- After you have registered for the first time, set up your Trinity e-mail account (see Trinity web page, and the student technology link). Faculty will communicate with you only through your Trinity email account.
- Validate your Trinity ID. Always carry your ID, and it must be presented before you can use the resources of the Library.
- Use the on-line resources of the library. (<http://library.trinitydc.edu/>)
- Keep a file of all your Trinity paperwork, registrations, receipts, transcripts, etc.
- Save copies of all your syllabi, written assignments, and portfolios.
- Follow your program of study. Meet with your advisor to revise your program.
- Purchase all the required books for your classes.
- Buy a copy of the APA manual or the APA pocket guide.
- Develop a calendar indicating all the academic deadlines.
- Ask for help at prevention stage (before mid-term). Seek services and/or talk to advisor and professors.
- Use the Writing Center. (<http://www.trinitydc.edu/academics/writing/>)
- Become acquainted with academic polices.
- Use the academic support services and counseling services if you need them.
- Notify your advisor if you decide to drop/withdraw from a class, withdraw from the university or decide to stop-out for a semester. **You are responsible for submitting all paper work to the registrar's office.**
- Use services of campus safety if you need an escort to car after evening classes.
- Do your best work.** You are responsible for your own academic success.
- TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR EDUCATION! IT IS YOUR RESPONSIBILITY!**

**This guide serves only as a supplement to the “official” publications of Trinity University. See the catalog, policy manual, and the student handbook for official policy information.**