Checklist for Graduate Student Papers

Modified from Nelson et al. - A Checklist to Guide Graduate Students’ Writing

Overall Organization

* Title < 15 words
* At least 2 headings if paper over 20 pages
* At least 2 paragraphs per heading

Introduction

* Builds case for importance of/need for paper
* Foreshadows paper organization (e.g., explicitly mentions all major sections)
* Closes with explicit statement of purpose

Body & Reference List

* Every section introduced and summarized
* Every point fully developed, clearly explained
* Every hypothesis tested
* Every paragraph has introductory and summary sentences
* All paragraphs at least two or more sentences, but less than one page in length
* Most paragraphs roughly equal length
* Most sentences roughly equal length
* No long sentences
* References every statement of fact
* No secondary sources
* Few direct quotes; all have quotation marks and page numbers
* Few authors or sources outside parentheses
* Most in-text citations at end, not middle, of sentences
* Few cites of a source more than once in the same paragraph
* Body is appropriate length

Conclusion

* Summarizes major points
* Provides interpretation of results
* Relates to other relevant work
* Includes limitations
* Gives recommendations and/or implications

Mechanics

* Uses 1" margins, 12-point Times New Roman font
* ~~Numbers pages~~
* ~~Abstract includes at least one sentence from introduction, method, results, and discussion~~
* Uses *et al.*correctly
* Each comparative (e.g., “most,” “better”) explicitly names comparison (e.g., “than”, “compared to,”)
* Uses (a), (b), etc. rather than (1), (2), etc., for lists within sentences
* If using a word processor, use styles to apply formatting to headings, paragraphs, captions, tables.
* ~~First paragraph of section without first line indented.~~
* ~~Second and later paragraphs in sections have first line indented.~~
* No line breaks between paragraphs.
* No double spaces – even not after the full stop at the end of a sentence
* All Figures and Tables are cited in the main text.
* Number all Tables and Figures in the order they first appear in the text.
* Use consistent Table and Figure citations, e.g. Fig. 1, or Figure 1, and not a mix of both.
* Each table or figure should be titled and captioned.
* Each panel of a figure should be labelled (a), (b), (c), etc.
* If possible, use a reference managing system (e.g. Zotero) to manage and enter the references. Still, however, check the formatting and content of the bibliography of the paper, and make any corrections in the manager and then update the bibliography.

Final Steps

* Peer/colleague has read the manuscript critically and has given written feedback, and that written feedback is attached
* All feedback has been addressed (changes made, explanation if not)
* Spelling and grammar checked with an electronic system
* References checked for accuracy against reference list.
* An outline of all headings is attached
* Statement of Personal Commitment
* I have carefully reviewed my paper and completed every checklist item. (I understand that my professor will return this draft without reading it unless I have done so.)
* I understand what constitutes plagiarism and the university policy regarding plagiarism. I attest that the submitted document is my own work.
* Signed:\_\_ Date: