# Research Paper Assignment

## Introduction

You must prepare an article-length research paper on a topic relating to the overall concept of crisis communication and emergency management. Your topic selection is subject to instructor approval. You may expand on the same topic you selected for your Technical Presentation assignment, or, you may pursue an alternate topic related to this course that is of special interest or relevance to you.

The length for the **body** of the paper should be approximately 12-15 pages (approximately 250-300 words per page, for a total of about 3,000-4,500 words), not including the Title Page, Table of Contents, Abstract, Tables, Appendixes (if any), and list of References.  Use standard formatting (margins, font, etc.). APA citation style should be followed throughout the paper. Keep in mind that overall length is just one criterion; the major criterion is the quality of the content. The paper must be submitted in the Assignment folder in LEO.

The topic proposal is due by the end of Week 3 on Tuesday night, June 8. The final, completed paper is due in the Assignment folder under the Research Paper folder at the end of Week 10 (Tuesday night, July 27).

You may earn up to a maximum of 100 points for the Research Paper, which will comprise 20% of your final overall grade for this course.

**NOTE:**

* You may re-use only a limited amount – 5% or less – of material from papers you have written for other courses at UMUC or at other institutions. You must also provide citation for that material in the body of the paper and in the reference list. Not doing so is considered self-plagiarism under APA guidelines (2010, pp. 16, 29, 170). If you feel that you have adequate justification for exceeding the 5% limit, discuss this in advance with the instructor, whose decision will be final.
* Quality of analysis is the most important criterion, not the exact word count.

If you have any questions about the assignment or the grading criteria, please post your question to **Q&A** for this assignment under the Research Paper folder. Please do NOT send an e-mail unless it is a personal question. Other students may have similar questions. All students should check regularly for any Q&A.

## Academic Integrity

With this assignment, as with all others, you must adhere to UMGC policies regarding academic integrity. Avoid plagiarism, both intentional and inadvertent, and provide accurate documentation and attribution of the work of others. UMGC's policy recommends "carefully following accepted scholarly practices. Notes taken for papers and research projects should accurately record sources of material to be cited, quoted, paraphrased or summarized, and papers and research projects should acknowledge these sources in references." (Policy 150.25 - Academic Dishonesty and Plagiarism).

UMGC has arranged with Turnitin to integrate this feature directly with the major assignments in the LEO classroom. Thus, you won’t need to establish a separate, individual Turnitin account. You can submit multiple drafts of your paper, generate Similarity Reports for yourself, and make any needed revisions up to the due date for the paper.

## Learning Objectives

Through successful completion of this assignment, you will:

* Devise and execute a research strategy to produce a quality, graduate-level research paper.
* Use the electronic UMGC library resources effectively and integrate sources in support of your research position.
* Analyze, synthesize, and evaluate elements of the topic.
* Present the information clearly and logically in a well-documented research paper.

## Scholarly Research

You are expected to use primarily scholarly publications in support of your topic (part of your research strategy). That means searching UMGC's online library databases for your sources.

You must develop your paper using **at least 10 high-quality references**. Of the 10 or more references, you must rely on and cite a **minimum of 5 scholarly and/or substantive government publications**, such as articles from academic journals, theses and dissertations, books or substantive official reports. You should search the UMGC Library databases or the Homeland Security Digital Library for journals or government documents. You should also include 5 or more references from other well-respected sources, such as government, think tank, or professional association publications or Web sites.

**Not acceptable**: Introductory textbooks, Wikipedia, blogs, online encyclopedias, or my weekly overview presentations.

Limit the number of secondary sources such as online articles from newspapers, popular magazines, or trade journals. A few are fine to supplement your primary sources, but don’t overdo it. Also, limit informational web pages or fact sheets you use as sources to no more than two (2). Citing simple informational web pages for research—even official web pages from government agencies—is not generally appropriate for graduate-level research papers, as these web pages seldom include authors, publication dates, or citations, and they are often brief and more informational than substantive. Also, avoid relying on vendor-provided information (unless, for example, you are comparing and contrasting vendors' claims).

## Citation Tips

You must cite correctly and follow the standards in the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association* (6th ed. or new 7th ed.) for in-text attribution of sources and for the reference list at the end. The UMGC Library provides some useful Web pages:

* APA: <http://www.umuc.edu/library/guides/apa.shtml>
* Tutorial, either HTML or Flash format: <http://www.umuc.edu/library/tutorials/citation/>

If you'd prefer video tutorials on APA style, try this web site: <http://www.apastyle.org/index.aspx>. The tutorials are at <http://www.apastyle.org/learn/tutorials/basics-tutorial.aspx>.

The tutorials cover things like how to properly cite references, how to write a well-structured paper (e.g., using headings), and how to avoid plagiarism.

In addition, Wikipedia provides a listing of other references and tools to correctly format your references: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/APA_style>.s Scroll to the External Links at the end. Note that for your own references, Wikipedia and online dictionaries will not count, since those are not primary sources. Scholarly, or substantive/authoritative primary sources are the standard for graduate school research.

## Milestones for This Assignment

**1. Select your topic.**

Post your brief topic proposal/thesis statement in the discussion forum labeled **Declare Your Research Topic under the Research Paper folder** by the end of Week 3, on Tuesday night, June 8. Topic proposals are subject to the approval of the instructor. Please do not post your proposal as an attached document.

**2. Submit the final paper.**

Submit to LEO: Submit the completed Research Paper as a Word doc (not as a PDF) in the Assignment folder dropbox under the Research Paper folder in LEO by the end of Week 10 on Tuesday night, July 27.

Late assignments will only be accepted with an approved extension.

## Specifications for the Research Paper

Content Specifications

The contents and organization of the paper should include:

* Title page or cover sheet with a formal title for your paper
* A concise literature review to summarize published scholarship on your topic and explain the major debates or controversies, alternate approaches or schools of thought, and main focus areas of the literature.
* Main body (see below)
* List of References or Works Cited
* (OPTIONAL) Abstract, Table of Contents, Appendices for figures, tables, etc.

Follow general APA formatting guidelines, with the exception that the document may be either single or double-spaced. I strongly recommend using subject headings in bold to organize the narrative and introduce transition points from one major topic or issue to another, and use paragraphing to break up and further organize the narrative in the body of the paper. I would also appreciate pagination (i.e., inserting sequential page numbers).

Good papers clearly present your research findings and analyze and assess those findings. At the graduate school level, you need to do more than report on your research; you must evaluate the significance and potential ramifications of the issue at hand. Where appropriate, you should also critique information you found in the sources you used. End your paper with a meaningful conclusion section. Conclusions summarize your evaluation of the topic or show how you proved your thesis statement. Conclusions do not present new information!

The **body** of the paper should be approximately 12-15 pages (approximately 250-300 words per page, for a total of about 3,000-4,500 words), not including the Title Page, Table of Contents, Abstract, Tables, Appendixes (if any), and References. These are guidelines, and not absolute or strict requirements. If you can brilliantly present an idea in 2,900 words, that is acceptable. If you exceed 4,500 words because you have significant analysis to present, that is fine. What is not acceptable is a paper that is brief rather than substantive, or includes excessive verbiage that strays off topic or consists of “filler” and "fluff."

Support all statements of facts, assertions, and conclusions with credible sources. Cite the source, whether you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting directly. Follow the APA guidelines for quoting sources, including specific page or paragraph numbers in the in-text citations.

Only a limited amount of material should be quoted, summarized, or paraphrased from sources. I recommend a maximum range of 10-15% as indicated in the Turnitin Similarity Report. You are to provide original analysis, synthesis, and evaluation of information. If it appears too high a proportion of your paper is quoted, it will be subject to additional scrutiny. Evaluate the quoted material to determine if it carries your analysis forward (good!) or if you are using it in place of your own critical thinking (bad!).

Document File Specifications

The document must be a Microsoft Word .doc or docx file or a rich text format (.rtf) file. Other file formats are not acceptable. If your paper is supported by diagrams or charts or statistics, please incorporate them into the document in an appropriate place, whether in the body or in an appendix. Figures and tables from your sources must be properly credited, following the guidelines in the APA Publication Manual.

**Grading Rubrics for the Research Paper:**

Your score on each exam will comprise 25% of your final overall grade. I will provide you with specific, constructive feedback along with a numerical score for each exam.

The Research Paper will be graded based on the Written Assignment and Final Paper Grading Rubrics linked in the Assignment folder.