

Ways to Think about Your Advanced Project - STUDENT GUIDE -

As you learned in your Foundations class, you should think of your Advanced Project (AP) as capping off your Focus Area studies. It shows advanced proficiency in the Focus Area, and this means that you not only demonstrate practical knowledge but also intellectual mastery of the field.

Advanced Projects can come in two basic forms:

(1) The AP includes two deliverables - an “artifact” and an analysis paper. The analysis paper provides a theoretical or analytical context for the particular artifact it accompanies.

(2) The AP consists of a stand-alone research paper.

Your first step in starting your Advanced Project is to think about the issue you want to pursue. What aspect of your Focus Area do you want to know more about? What kind of product or artifact do you want to create that is of practical use for people connected to or affected by specific aspects of the field that is represented by your Focus Area?

For instance, you may want to look more closely at a problem at your workplace, or in your community (depending on your particular Focus Area), and you want to understand better what causes or contributes to the problem. You may also want to provide possible solutions; or your Focus Area is creative writing and you want to reach a higher level of ability in poetry writing; or you are the parent of an adopted child and want to explore the social history of adoption in the United States. You may also be asked at your job to take initiative regarding a particular major project, and because it relates to your Focus Area you want to make it an integral part of the Advanced Project. These are just some examples to help you think about your Advanced Project.

Your faculty mentor and professional advisor are there to serve you as partners in a conversation about possibilities, and what route is best for you to take. They assist you along the way, give you feedback and encouragement, inform you about scheduling and deadlines, and assess and approve the final version of your Advanced Project. In this Guide we give you some ideas about what forms and Advanced Project could take, and what are some key issues to take into consideration when thinking about possibilities and making concrete plans.

Section I of this Guide assists you in clarifying the steps involved in the two-pronged approach to the Advanced Project: *artifact and analysis*. Section II addresses what is involved in producing a *stand-alone research paper*. Section III gives you links to places and events that can be of help along the way of creating your AP.

I. The Two-Pronged Advanced Project: *Artifact + Analysis*

In this approach to F11 & F12 you generate two related items that together constitute your Advanced Project.

One item is the artifact – something you make. **The other item is an analysis** – a paper that discusses, in a critically thoughtful way, how and why you made the artifact the way you did (and not some other way).

Of course the artifact and analysis should be well attuned to your Focus Area studies.

The table below (which is by no means exhaustive) provides some illustrations:

Sample Focus Area	Possible Artifact
Fiction Writing	A sequence of thematically linked short stories
Principles & Practices of Business Administration	A business plan for a particular venture (e.g., a micro-brewery)
Organizational Development	A set of policies and procedures which address an HR issue (e.g., maternity leave) in a company that currently lacks such policies and procedures
Writing & Producing for Radio	A 15-minute, broadcast-ready radio documentary on a topic of note (e.g., voter ID laws recently passed in Indiana)
Workforce Training & Development	A training module on a particular topic of concern (e.g., diversity) within a particular workplace setting
Social Work Studies	A practical guide for teenage survivors of sexual violence, detailing steps toward recovery and providing a list of helpful sites and resources in the Chicago metro region.
Popular Music Performance	A performance before a live audience of songs you've written, recorded on DVD
Marketing Communications	A how-to guide on marketing through social media for a particular type of firm or institution

As indicated above, an artifact is something that's made by a human being. **Now, whenever a person makes something she or he makes choices.** Whether you're baking a cake or designing a garage or planning a business or sculpting a bust, you make choices all along the way. And some of those choices are particularly significant. They're sometimes called the "major decision points" in the artifact-making process.

This is where the analysis comes in. In your analysis paper, you zero in and reflect on the big choices – the major decision points – in your artifact-making process. In your analysis you discuss how you arrived at each of those major

choices/decisions. You explain what you did at that particular point, and why you did what you did and not something else. In other words, *you locate and delineate each big decision point and then discuss the rationale by which you made your decision.* **And this discussion of decisions and rationales should be carefully detailed, critically thought through, and grounded in documentable sources.**

Although your analysis paper will have a bibliography and will cite sources, as a companion to the artifact it won't be like a stand-alone research paper. Its primary focus will be on the process you went through in making the artifact, and on the major choices involved (and not simply on researching some topic or question). But if your discussion of the process and the choices is to meet the first two criteria mentioned above – if it's to be carefully detailed and critically thought through – then it will *have* to cite sources (much as a research paper would).

The sources in question may be quite varied. They might range from scholarly articles to professional studies to interviews with experts to consensus-based best practices. In addition, your own experience, intuition, plain guesswork and/or willingness to take a risk might well be part of the rationale for any given choice. **The process of making an artifact is usually messy. That's fine. This is what your analysis paper talks about. This is what your Academic Committee – your Faculty Mentor and Professional Advisor – want to hear about.**

And here we come to a final distinction – one about audiences. The audience for your artifact is specific to it. That is, the audience for a collection of short stories is people who read short fiction (or perhaps even a certain genre of short fiction). The audience for a business plan is potential investors in the business. The audience for a set of HR procedures is the management and workers of the company in question. The audience for a practical guide for the children of an Alzheimer parent is the daughters or sons themselves.

These audiences for artifacts are all *out there* – outside the academy. But the audience for your analysis – your Academic Committee – is *in here*, inside the academy. And this is a distinction that makes a difference. Consider: Potential investors in a business want to read the business plan, but they don't want read anything extra. They almost certainly don't want to hear about your messy process. Indeed, it would be undesirable or perhaps even inappropriate for you to share that with them. Such outside audiences are only interested in the artifact – the manual or the program or the guide or the song -- that bright, shiny *thing* that you've made *for them*.

That's as it should be with artifacts. **But your Academic Committee isn't nearly as interested in the thing, the artifact, as that outside audience is. Your committee's interest is almost the opposite. Your committee wants you to go below the shiny surface, pull out the mucky, difficult stuff and pay close, thoughtful attention to it.**

Thus the two products – artifact and analysis – cut in two different directions but ultimately balance each other in terms of practice and theory, application and reflection.

II. Advanced Project: *Research Paper*

When the subject and purpose of your AP is to critically investigate a particular issue – and this can be a problem, a phenomenon, or an event you want to really understand – you will more likely aim at producing a stand-alone research paper.

Here are a few examples:

Sample Focus Area	Possible Research Paper
Health Care Studies	An analysis of health disparities among different racial-ethnic populations nationally and locally.
International Business	An investigation of the impact of an US-based oil corporation's devastating impact on the Ogoni people living in the Niger Delta region in Nigeria.
Environmental Sustainability	An investigation of the environmental and health effects of massive social and individual use of plastic bottles.

First of all, **go with what interests you**. As the examples above indicate, these are big projects, and it's likely you'll spend a lot of time reading and writing about your topic. **Make sure you choose a topic that genuinely captures your passion.**

You may start out with a rather broad topic. Just practice what you learned in Research Seminar or in your writing classes about how to narrow a topic. You may feel passionate about all the topic entails, but in order to make it doable you should develop a particular question and related sub-questions. These will not only guide your library research but also keep you from continuously branching out into other areas instead of firmly holding on to one particular branch.

Once you are pretty clear about your topic and specific questions, start thinking about what sources you want to draw on. You may already have developed a list of sources and data gathering steps in the **methodology** of the research proposal you developed in Research Seminar. At least in your mind you can follow the same pattern.

Even if you plan on doing a number of interviews, or perhaps a survey in order to gather data from people directly involved in different aspects of your study, you should still start out by reviewing available literature. **This is similar to but not the same as the literature review you did in Research Seminar.** Where previously you wanted to show what you know about an area in order to **propose** a research question, now you want to **find answers to your research question(s).**

Depending on your study design and the methodology you created, a thorough library research may or may not be sufficient for giving you the answers to your question(s). For instance, the student who wants to study the environmental impact of our massive use of plastic bottles may find plenty of information. She decides, however, to also investigate whether and how people can reduce their use of these bottles or even find ways of avoiding them altogether. She therefore looks at the available information with a critical eye, and includes in her paper a section that describes possible educational

steps to take in order to unlearn our dependence on plastic. She decides to interview the principals of a select number of high schools to see whether they would allow teachers to launch an educational campaign along these lines. The data she will gather will be integrated into the section that addresses the importance of educational efforts.

Always keep in mind that no matter what topic you choose, there will always be different perspectives. You need to carefully describe and consider them before providing your own point of view that needs to be backed up by concrete evidence and persuasive argumentation. Your Academic Committee is your primary audience. If you are planning to apply for graduate school, such a paper may also serve as a portfolio of your academic skills

III: Advanced Project: *Resources and Links*

SNL and DePaul provide a number of useful resources:

- Your *Foundations Resource Book* gives you a description of what is expected from you as well as examples of different topics. You'll find the book on the SNL Forms page, along with the [Advanced Project Worksheet](#) and the [Advanced Project Proposal and Contract](#). Just go to <http://www.snl.depaul.edu/StudentResources/Forms/index.asp>

On the same page you also find the [Advanced Project Assessment Rubric](#). The rubric not only provides an assessment tool for professional advisor and faculty mentor but also a tool for you, asking you to regularly check it and remind yourself of SNL's general AP criteria.

DePaul's University Center for Writing-based Learning also cites sections of Ch. 5 of the *Foundations Resource Book* that focus on the Advanced Project. Just go to http://condor.depaul.edu/writing/writers/Types_of_Writing/snl_advanced_project.html

- By clicking on the SNL Writing Guide you will find an assortment of "Help on Your Advanced Project," ranging from examples of actual, complete Advanced Projects produced by SNL graduates to "10 Tips for a Strong Start," to announcements of Writing Groups or Advanced Project Workshops or Boot camps, to all the help you may need for properly writing and documenting your sources. Just go to <http://snl.depaul.edu/writing/index.html>