

MINDFIRE PRESS ARTICLE

Anatomy of a KAM

by

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Doctoral Series

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Writing major, evidence-based papers is necessary in a doctoral program. When I was a doctoral student, we wrote KAMs. A KAM, which stands for Knowledge Area Module, is a tremendous learning tool that can help any doctoral student to learn how to write like a scholar. For this reason, we will focus on the structure, content, and formatting of a KAM in this article.

Anatomy of a KAM

A KAM is a three-part, 100-page plus, research-based paper written on a single topic within a field of study in accordance with APA style requirements. Its content adheres closely to the guidelines stated in the guide for the KAM for the particular field of study focused on in the paper (e.g., human development, leadership, organizational change, decision sciences, public policy, human services, etc.).

Here is how to approach the development of a KAM:

First, you must choose an overall theme/topic for your KAM within the field of study covered by the KAM (e.g., the principles of human development). This theme will be the primary focus and the integrating element of your KAM.

For the first part of the paper, the Breadth component, you must read books (known as primary sources) of four to six major theorists in that area of knowledge. You must then critically examine in a 30-page Breadth essay, using the higher order skills of analysis, synthesis, and evaluation, the theories of these important original thinkers as they relate to your central theme.

[Note: For background information, you may read secondary sources, like encyclopedias, textbooks, and books by other authors about your theorists and their theories (known as secondary sources), but ***you must base your essay exclusively on your critical reading and analysis of the original works (books) of the theorists you selected.***]

For the second part, the Depth component, you must find and read critically at least 15 articles published in refereed journals in the past five years that apply to the specific aspect of your main KAM theme that you have chosen to study in greater depth. Based on this current research, you must write annotations for 15 of the

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journal articles in which you analyze the articles from a research perspective, and a 25-30-page Depth essay which again demonstrates higher order critical thinking skills.

[Note: *You may incorporate research published earlier than five years earlier, along with pertinent articles reviewed in your annotated bibliography, in your Depth essay.* However, *you must not include any articles more than five years old in your annotated bibliography.* Read the guide for the KAM you are working on carefully. Some guides require the majority of the articles in your annotated bibliography for the KAM Depth to be less than 3 years old.]

Finally, in the third part, your Application demonstration, you must use the theories you examined in the Breadth and your research findings from the Depth to evaluate critically a professional or organizational problem in your area of specialization. This demonstration can either take the form of a 30-page essay, or a major project that you have previously completed in this field of study (or choose to complete for this demonstration) and a 10-page bridge paper that critically evaluates the project in terms of the Breadth theories and Depth research findings.

[Note that *if you choose to do a project as part of your Application demonstration, the project description and its critical evaluation in the bridge paper must be the equivalent of a 30-page essay.*]

Here is a table of the approximate number of high quality, doctoral-level pages required for a typical KAM, so that you know what you it consists of:

KAM Element(s)	Number of Pages
Preliminaries (Title page, Abstracts, Table of Contents)	5
Breadth Essay	30
Depth Annotations*	15
Depth Essay**	30
Application (Essay or Equivalent Major Project plus Bridge Paper)	30
References	TBD
Total	110 +

* This is an estimate based on an average of one page per annotation. Some may be longer, some may be shorter.

**Some guides say 25-30, but the ideal is still 30 pages for all component essays.

Conclusion

If you follow these KAM guidelines, you will find yourself writing high quality doctoral papers from the outset. In addition to demonstrating to the faculty your growing competence as a scholar, this will save you time (because you will have fewer revisions to make), and thus enable you to complete your program of study sooner.

If you found this article useful, be sure to share it with other doctoral students.

Finally, to learn more about writing scholarly papers and other important aspects of doctoral study, go to www.mindfirepress.com or www.Amazon.com and order a copy of *Student to Scholar: The Guide for Doctoral Students* by Robert E. Levasseur, Ph.D.

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