Tips for Composing your McNair Research Paper

First thing’s first: There is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach for writing your paper. You are becoming scholars in your respective fields of study, and your writing style should reflect the conventions for writing in a particular field.

As scholars you’re not simply reproducing others' work. Your experiments, analyses, and reviews are contributing new ideas and insights.

Formatting - Ideally, your paper should be typed in a standard 12 pt. font (i.e. Times New Roman), double-spaced, with 1-inch margins. Check with your faculty mentor on the conventions for formatting in your field.

Page length - The length of your paper will depend on the parameters of your project and your field of study. For example, papers in the natural sciences tend to be shorter, with more visual representations of data, than papers in the social sciences and humanities.

Components of the paper:
Again, the sections will depend on your field of study...

- **Title** - Develop a title that accurately and concisely conveys your research project.

- **Abstract** - This abstract is a brief (200-300 word) paragraph summarizing your research paper. Think of the abstract as a preview of your paper, highlighting the key points and findings.

- **Introduction** - Provide an overview of your topic and contextualize your study. What are you doing, what issues are at stake in your project, and, ultimately, why is your research significant or important? Here, you will also introduce your hypotheses or research questions and objectives.

- **Literature Review** - This section should both summarize and critically analyze previously published research in your topical area. In other words, what theories or models provide the basis for your work? Once you review the literature, you’ll have a sense of how your project contributes to scholarly conversations in your field of study.

- **Research Methodology** - This section establishes the framework of analysis and sets parameters for the study. Explain how you conducted your research and gathered and analyzed data (i.e. experimental groups, statistical analysis, close reading of texts, etc.).

- **Results** - What did you find? In this section, outline your findings, discuss the highlights of your data analysis and interpret your results.

- **Discussion/Conclusions** - Summarize and explain the significance of your findings. Were your hypotheses supported? What is the potential impact of your findings? You should also discuss the study’s limitations (methods used, sample sizes, etc.) and provide questions or suggestions for future research on the topic.

- **Citations/References** – be sure to give credit to all sources and include a works cited or references page; check on the appropriate citation format in your discipline.

Let’s consider some examples: Shaneequa’s paper - a cultural study; Tonisha’s paper - an economic study