**Graduate Writing Coach**

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**Adapting Your Work for Bigger Things**

**Seminar Paper → Conference Paper → Publication**

*Although seminar papers are great places to start workshopping your arguments, they are often too parochial—too narrowly focused; too narrowly tailored to a specific reader—to submit to outside audiences. This handout will give you some suggestions for how to reconceptualize your work and adapt your existing papers for new audiences and venues. Pay particular attention to the guiding questions that we start with; there isn’t one way to do this, so a lot of it comes down to how you want to present your work (and yourself) to the world. -TM*

**Ways to Make a Contribution**

The first thing is to consider the different ways that your paper attempts to contribute to some broader conversation. Though there are many ways to contribute, the four most common are probably by (1) developing your discipline’s **theoretical** frameworks, (2) adding to the understanding of a particular **topic/subject**, (3) expanding the **methodological** toolkit of your field, and (3) contributing a solution to a pressing **problem**.

Diagram

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**Questions to ask yourself about your contribution:**

What are the major topics/subjects that your work touches on and can it be used to understand other, similar/related topics?

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Does your work build-on, complicate, refute, or apply (or something else) existing theory?

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What is the timely significance of your work? If you had to adapt it for public presentation, what situation would you focus on?

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Do you use any new or innovative methodologies in your paper? Do you apply an established methodology in a unique way?

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**Keywording your Contribution**

For each of the following categories, brainstorm keywords that you would use to describe your project:

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Topic/Subject** | **Theory** | **Method** | **Problem/Solution** |
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Next, if you don’t yet have an idea of what you want to do with your paper, consider the following:

* Using the keywords you came up with, search through last year’s call for papers in your field’s **major professional guild meeting** to see if there were any sessions on the topics you are studying. If not, see if there are any close synonyms or ideas related to what you are studying—can you reframe your project around those conversations?
* Go through your bibliography to find the journals that the scholars you cite published in. Those might be good places to submit your work.
* Look for journals/conferences that publish/court pieces that overlap with the **methodology or theoretical framework** of your paper (e.g. *Qualitative Research Reports in Communication*); look for journals that publish information in a **specific subject** that you touch on (e.g. *Health Communication,* The National Conference on Health, Communication, Marketing, and Media); look for journals that cover the **entire field** (e.g. *The Journal of Communication*)
* When you have a short list of potential publications you might want to submit to, choose one and look at what information it provides to submitting authors. Do the editors say anything about the scope of the projects they invite or the intended audience?