

# How to Write a Research Proposal

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# General Structure of Your Proposal

- **Introduction**
  - *What are you researching and why is it important?*
- **Methodology**
  - *How are you going to gather your results?*
- **Literature Review**
  - *What have other scholars written about this topic?*
- **Preliminary Source List**
  - *What sources do you plan to use?*

# What Is a Research Question?

A research question is the question you will be answering in your research. It is not the same as a topic, which is simply the general area you will be studying.

TOPIC	RESEARCH QUESTION
Air pollution in Bishkek	How do Bishkek's strategies for air pollution management compare to those of other Central Asian capitals?
	How does Bishkek's air pollution affect residents' decisions about where to live?
	How does Bishkek's air pollution affect residents' voting patterns in city elections?

# What Makes a Good Research Question?

A research question should be specific, answerable with credible sources, feasible to tackle given your time constraints, neutral, and complex.

## EXAMPLES OF BAD RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How does air pollution affect people?

How does Bishkek's air pollution impact people's health over a ten-year period?

Why are politicians too lazy to find a solution to Bishkek's air pollution problem?

Is pollution bad?

Does Bishkek have an air pollution problem?

# Introduction

- What is the focus of your research?
- Why is it important?
- What is/are your research question(s)?

- This study will examine...
- The goal/objective of this project is to...
- This project seeks/aims to...
- I hope to shed light on...
- This is significant because...

# Methodology

- What is your research design? How will you collect your data? How will you analyze it?
  - What is your justification for your choices? Why didn't you choose another method?
  - Are there any shortcomings to your methodological approach? Are there any flaws in your research design that you should acknowledge?
- This study will use/utilize...
  - The survey will ask participants about...
  - The goal of the interviews is to...
  - To recruit participants, I will...
  - [Method] will be used in order to...
  - ... might be over/under-represented in the sample.
  - One limitation of this method is...

# Literature review

- What is already known about your research question?
- What theoretical lenses have already been applied or are relevant to this question?
- What data have other studies found that might be relevant?
- Is there a hole in the scholarship that you can help fill?
- Do you find fault with the work of previous authors?

- Other scholars have argued...
- Previous research has found...
- Several/many studies have examined...
- However, these studies fail to...
- One area that has not been studied is...
- Relatively little is known about...
- ... is understudied/poorly understood.
- Building upon this earlier scholarship, I wish to...

# Conclusion

- What are the real-world implications of your findings?
- What is the value of this research?

- This study has implications for...
- The findings of this study can be applied to...
- This research will help us understand...



# Research Proposal Checklist

- Introduction
  - What question will I be answering in my research?
  - Why is it important?
- Methodology
  - What is my research design?
  - Why is it the best way to answer my research question?
- Literature review
  - What have others said about my research question?
  - What niche can my research fill?
- Conclusion
  - What is the value of this research?
- Preliminary source list

# If you're stuck...

- Know that you don't have to write from beginning to end
  - Try switching your attention to a different section that you're ready to work on
- Is there a different kind of task that you could work on instead?
  - Finding sources, formatting the bibliography...
- Can you talk with your adviser?
- Can your peers help?

# Further Resources

- Examples of old student theses are available on the library's site
  - Go to <http://elibrary.auca.kg/> and scroll down to Senior Theses
- The [Resources for Students](#) page of the WARC's website contains a number of guides and examples for you to look at
- **You are welcome to come to the WARC at any stage!**
  - Go to [www.warc.auca.kg](http://www.warc.auca.kg) to book a session