URSCA Mini-Forum

HOW TO

Create a Research Plan

UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN River Falls
UNDERGRADUATE RESEARCH, SCHOLARLY AND CREATIVE ACTIVITY
Basic recipe for a competitive research proposal:

1. Explain the need for the project
2. State your objectives
3. Prepare a work plan
4. Determine the final products and a dissemination plan
You will learn things you might not learn in a classroom.

Working on a research or creative project with a faculty or staff mentor is an opportunity for you to go beyond learning about a discipline and become actively involved in creating knowledge and new meaning within the discipline.
Let’s take the process step by step!

- Introduction/Background/Statement of the Problem
- Objectives
- Research Methods and Timeline
- Dissemination Plan
- Budget
Get the reader’s interest early by starting with a quote, statistic, or question

- One way you could do this is by using a fact or statistic. For example, if you were writing a paper about world hunger you could write "842 million people in the world do not have enough to eat." This is a way to "shock" the reader and make them more curious about the topic.

What goes into a useful “Background” or “Introduction” Statement? This is where you explain the NEED for the project!
More on “Background” Statements:

- Briefly summarize previous work.
- Provide the context—or the big picture—and how it relates to your specific topic or project idea. Your project is logical next step in the field.
- Include Significance: Why should the public fund this work? How will society benefit? Last sentences address your project in detail.
2. Objectives

2-3 bullets with specific objectives

Objectives answer the questions:
- Who?
- How much?
- What?
- By when?
- What will the results be?

Goals vs. Objectives
- **Goals**: broad, general, intangible, abstract, can't be validated
- **Objectives**: narrow, specific, tangible, concrete, can be validated
3. Research Methods and Timeline

Explain

- Quantitative or Qualitative?
  - Quantitative Design – Experimental, Survey/Correlational
  - Qualitative Design - Interviews/Essays
- Sample – Size, Selection
- Analysis plan for qualitative or quantitative data
- Reason for any travel
- Supplies or equipment used
- Institutional Review Board approval for human participants

These should all tie back to your objectives
3. Methods – Lab or Field Research

What will you do to achieve your objectives?

Explain
- Method for conducting the research
- Reason for any travel
- Supplies or equipment used

These should all tie back to your objectives
3. Methods – Performance/Project

What will you do to achieve your objectives?

Explain

- Method for developing the performance or project
- Reason for any travel
- Supplies or equipment needed

These should all tie back to your objectives
What will you do to achieve your objectives?

Explain
- Method for analyzing
- Reason for any travel
- Supplies or equipment needed

These should all tie back to your objectives
4. Final Products and Dissemination

What results do you expect?

How will you tell others about your work?

- Publication
- Oral or poster presentation
- Gallery display
Most Common Mistakes

In all Disciplinary Fields:

- Little or no development of a research question.

In the Arts:

- Research proposal is just used to get supplies.
- Only focuses on benefits to artist.
- No larger motive or purpose.
Sciences:
- Too technical.
- Uses jargon and undefined scientific terms.
- Not explained at a general level.
- Cannot see big picture.

Humanities:
- Example questions in surveys not included.
- IRB required.
- Sample size and other experimental details lacking.