

Research Proposal

ECO 230: Business Research and Communication

Goals and Learning Objectives

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- Goal: Learn the fundamental characteristics of a research proposal.
- Learning objective: LO1: Develop the ability to define a research problem. Formulate research questions and hypotheses that are measurable, well-defined, address the overall problem, are directly related, and reflect the scope of the problem.

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- **Unit of analysis:** that which defines a single observation from your population, from which you can draw measures of one or more variables.
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Types of Variables in Research

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- **Outcome variables:** What is the research trying to explain?
- **Explanatory variables:** What are you investigating that could affect the outcome variable?
- **Control variables:** What other information (eg: demographic) might be correlated with or explain outcome?

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Q: "How does living on campus affect academic performance?"

- Unit of analysis: single UW-L college student.
- Outcome variable: GPA (Scale 0.0-4.0)
- Explanatory variable: housing situation (on or off)
- Control variables: gender, college (CLS, CBA, SAL)

Q: "How does state revenue affect public education expenditures?"

- Unit of analysis: A single U.S. state.
- Outcome variable: Public education expenditure
- Explanatory variables: Tax Revenue
- Control variable: Region (Northeast, Southeast, Southwest, Midwest, Northwest)

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- Written statement of what the research project will entail
- Purpose is to gain permission, or ask for funding, to conduct the research.
- This is *not* just an introduction of a research paper.

Components of a Research Proposal

- Purpose of the research
- Background and motivation: Why is more research valuable?
- Research design
- Outcomes
- Others: Deliverables, Budget

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Purpose of the Research

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Immediately communicate the purpose / research question.

Details and Background

- Are you going to investigate the significance of multiple causes towards some effect?
- Are you going to investigate the importance of multiple possible symptoms of a problem?
- Are you going to investigate multiple possible solutions to a problem?
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Research Design: *How* will you answer the question?

Methodology Details

- How the sample will be collected? What is the population?
- What variables / What survey questions?
- What relationships among the variables?
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- What statistical analysis will answer your research question?

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What will we learned from the research?

- Be specific
- Not overly optimistic
- Not overly general
- You will be held accountable for what you promise here
- What decisions *can be informed* by your results?

Dissemination / Deliverables

- Paper, report, presentation?
- Who will your audience be?
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