

RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

The “Economics and Politics in Asia” BA Double Degree Program

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RESEARCH PAPER GUIDELINES

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STEP 1: Research question & Research

Research question

What is the topic that interests you most?

Examples of a topic:

- democracy
- international trade
- environmental protection
- gender equality...

What is the issue that you want to know more about within this topic?

Examples of an issue:

- democratic transitions
- free trade agreements
- climate change policies
- women's representation in elected public bodies...

What question do you want to ask?

Good research questions focus on cause and effect. Answers often include saying who, what, when, where, how, but the focus is always on why. In other words, you need a causal question.

Causal Questions are designed to determine whether one or more variables cause or affect one or more outcome variables.

Why is ethnic conflict violent in some cases, but is non-violent and occurs within the framework of democratic competition in others?

Why do resource-rich states democratize more slowly?

Why is the Communist Party of China still in power?

Why are some countries democracies and others not?

Causal questions can generate a debate about what are the best answers. They involve arguments: evidence in support of a position or claim. Usually, we describe and explain via comparison, and sometimes predict outcomes based on evidence that we observe and collect. We want to know *why* outcomes in the world are as they have turned out, rather than how the world *should be*.

It is possible to ask causal questions that do not begin with “*why*”

- What are the consequences of different kinds of institutions for policy?
- What are the consequences of presidential vs. parliamentary systems for environmental policy?
- Under what conditions will democracies emerge and consolidate?
- How do major economic crises affect subsequent political developments in given countries?

Make your question specific.

For example, your topic of interest is democracy, and you are interested in the process of democratization (an introduction of a democratic system or democratic principles in a country). In this case, you could formulate the following question:

- Why are some countries democratic and others not?

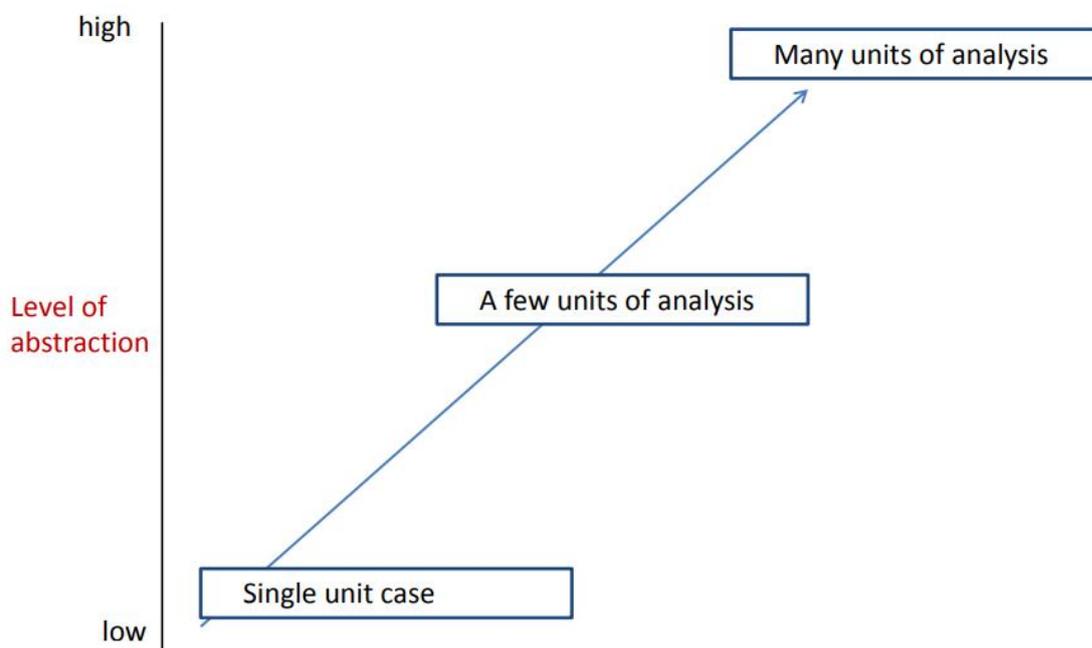
Make this question specific by adding case(s). For example:

- Why is Japan a democracy?
- Why is China not a democracy?
- Why is Japan a democracy and China not?

Cases

What cases will you study?

- **A case study** focuses on a single entity (e.g., a person, group or organization, event, action, or situation).
- **A cross-case study**, as the name suggests, is typically focused on cross-case variation and includes multiple cases.
- The more cases there are, the more is the level of abstraction.
- The fewer cases there are, and the more intensively they are studied, the more a work merits to be called a case study.

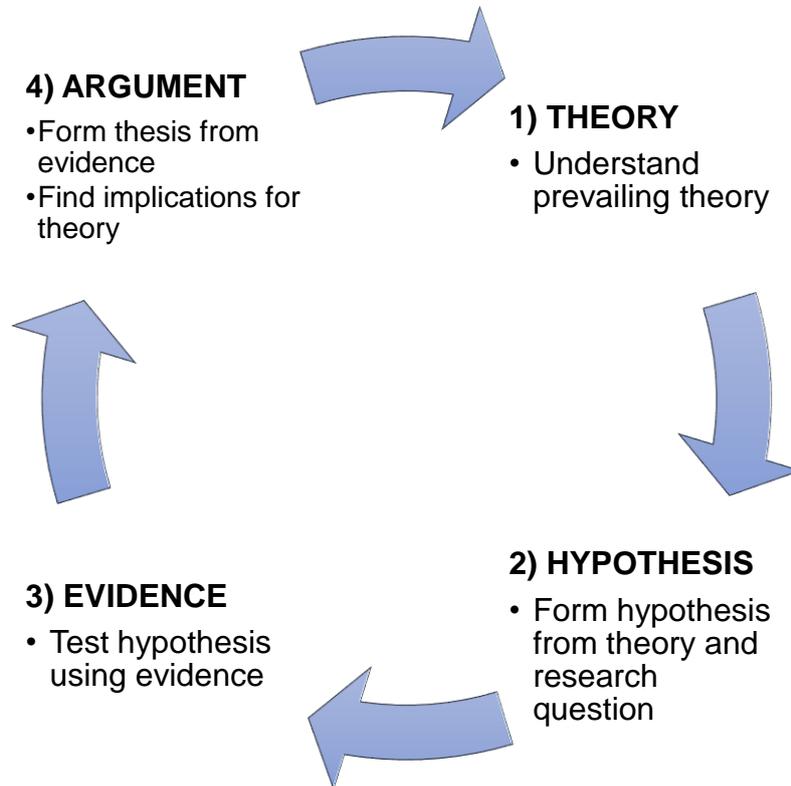


There are seven major types of cases (Gerring & Seawright 2008):

- Typical cases confirm a given theory;
- Diverse cases illuminate the full range of variation on X, Y or X/Y;
- Extreme cases have an extremely unusual value on X or Y;

- Deviant cases deviate from an established cross-case population (the “black swans”);
- Influential cases have established and influential configurations of X’s;
- Most similar cases are similar in all variables except X1 and Y;
- Most different cases are different on all variables except X1 and Y;

Moving from theory to argument



Theory has a pivotal role in social science: it focuses on the choice of empirical research topic and integrates the results of this research. Theory is a general explanation for empirical phenomena. Theories generally have some support for their arguments in the real world. Theories are explanations for *why* and *how* things happen as they do.

A hypothesis is a specific prediction that can be tested against empirical evidence. It is an explicit statement that indicates how a researcher thinks the phenomena of interest are related. Formulating hypotheses is developing possible answers to a research question. It should be an educated guess about relationships that exist in the real world, not statements about what ought to be true.

You test your hypothesis using quantitative and qualitative evidence.

QUALITATIVE

QUANTITATIVE

Analysis based on facts in narrative form	Analysis using mathematical examination
Historical accounts and historical records (e.g., constitutions, laws, personal narratives)	Statistics (e.g. surveys, economic data)

Testing hypothesis leads to **a thesis**. A thesis is an argument backed by evidence. Both the hypothesis and the thesis answer the research question of the study.

When the statement is one that can be proved or disproved, it is a **hypothesis statement**. If instead, the statement specifically shows the intentions, objectives, and/ or position of the researcher, it is **a thesis statement**. A thesis statement is a short, direct sentence that summarizes the main point or claim of an essay or research paper.

Conceptualization and Operationalization

Concepts are ideas social scientists use to think about the processes they study. They are mental constructs that are a combination of characteristics.

Good concepts are:

- Clear and coherent
- Consistent
- Useful for measuring variables

Conceptualization is a process of identifying or making up concepts. It is about defining the agreed meaning of the terms used in a study.

Operationalization is a process of making basic concepts measurable. By operationalizing the key concepts, we explain how we will examine it.

An operational definition is a “recipe” for measuring and/or manipulating a construct in a study.

Example No.1

Research question:

Why do people love sports?

Conceptualization:

What does it mean “to love sports”? Is it about watching or about doing?

Operational definition No. 1:

The % of life spent doing sports.

Operational definition No. 2:

The % of life spent watching sports.



Example No. 2

Research question:

Why is South Korea a democracy?

Conceptualization:

What is democracy?

Operationalization:

There are many concepts of democracy (coming from different theories), and thus we can develop many operational definitions of democracy:

- a country holds a free and fair multiparty election;
- constitutional law guarantees freedom of speech, press, assembly, and religion;
- there is no verifiable suppression of political participation and expression;
- there is gender equality.

Doing research: Step-by-step

Guideline	Step 1: Ask Good Questions	Step 2: Test Hypotheses	Step 3: Develop Argument
Do the basics	Ask an open-ended WHY question about cause and effect	Define concepts and variables clearly	Read and use scholarship on the topic
Be original and informed	Ask a question for which you do not have an answer decided before research	Use scholarly theories to form hypotheses, not just your own ideas	Make meaningful claims, not just laundry lists of what matters
Examine evidence	Ask a question for which evidence is available to test the hypothesis	Be aware of biases and rely on evidence (not assumptions)	Use evidence and opinion to back the claims and arguments

Summary

Answer the following questions:

- 1) What issue are you going to study?
- 2) What does this issue matter? What is its social, political, cultural, or economic significance?
- 3) What is your research question? Why is your question worth asking?
- 4) What cases will you use? How will these cases help you to answer your question?
- 5) What is your theory? Do you have a raw hypothesis?
- 6) What evidence will you use?

STEP 2: Choose your literature

Primary vs. Secondary sources

Primary sources

- created during the time period being studied or were created at a later date by a participant in the events being studied (e.g. memoirs).
- reflect the individual viewpoint of a participant or observer.
- enable the researcher to get as close as possible to what actually happened during a historical event or time period.

Examples of primary:

- Historical and legal documents;
- Speeches, diaries, letters, and interviews;
- Datasets, survey data, and all other sorts of statistical data;
- Photographs, video, or audio that capture an event;
- Fiction literature and art objects.

Secondary sources

- are generally at least one step removed from the event and are often based on primary sources.
- describe, discuss, interpret, comment upon, analyze, evaluate, summarize, and process primary sources.
- is a work that interprets or analyzes a historical event or phenomenon (e.g. an academic article or an editorial in a newspaper).

Be careful with newspapers. Newspapers can be treated as both secondary and primary sources, depending on your research question. All newspapers article provide not only facts but also has an opinion interjected. This is why it is important to ask yourself some questions about the article before you include it in your research:

- Who wrote the article? An expert, a journalist, an eyewitness to an event?
- Why was the article written? In response to a current event, to spread news, to share an opinion?
- When was the article published? Was the article published before or after the event it discusses?
- Does the tone of the article matter for your research?

Be creative and search for primary sources that best suit your research. In certain cases, even textbooks can become a primary source. E.g. how do Japan and South Korea present WW II history in textbooks? If the topic is related to education,

textbooks could be used primary sources to look at how and why they have changed over time.

Academic vs. Non-Academic sources

Professionals in a given field write academic sources. Their language is formal and will contain words and terms typical to the field. The author's name will be present, as will their credentials. There *always* will be a list of references that indicate where the author obtained the information s/he is using in the article. Academic sources are generally published to share research findings. Often have an abstract, a descriptive summary of the article contents, before the main text of the article. Academic sources *always* go through a peer-review process.

- *Examples: peer-reviewed journal articles, books, edited volumes.*

What is “peer-reviewed”? Peer-review means that the writing has been reviewed and vetted by other researchers or experts in the same field. Some databases, including electronic library catalogs, allow you to limit your search results by “scholarly” or “peer-reviewed” journals. Please be advised that this is not a perfect way to see if a source is peer-reviewed, and some non-peer reviewed sources may still present themselves in the search results. It is always up to you to double-check.

Non-academic sources are written for the mass public. Their language is geared to any educated audience, but the language could also be informal, casual, and may contain slang. Non-academic sources are generally published for profit. May be intended as a vehicle of opinion - political, moral, or ethnic. The authors may be anonymous.

- *Examples: journal articles, working papers of NGOs and think-tanks, blogs.*

Summary

Be creative and search for primary sources that best suit your research.

Your source qualifies as an academic/ scholarly if it meets all the following criteria:

1. Not anonymous;
2. Written by a scholar or a group of scholars;
3. Published through a peer-review process;
4. Has a list of references;
5. Uses formal language and scholarly terms/ concepts to discuss the topic;
6. Has an abstract (for journal articles).

NEVER USE WIKIPEDIA AS A SOURCE.

STEP 3: Structure of your paper

Essential components of a research paper

1) You need an original title for your paper.

- Eye-catching: Make the readers interested in your work.
- Make it easy to read.
 - If your title contains verbs, always make sure they are in active, rather than passive voice.
 - Good: *How does popular culture shift deeply-held cultural attitudes towards women in South Korea?*
 - Bad: *Is the shift of deeply-held cultural attitudes towards women in South Korea caused by popular culture?*
- Concise writing: Long headlines are confusing.
- Accurate: Give your readers a clear idea of what they are going to read in your paper.
- The title is the first words that your readers see. However, you should work backward. Write your paper as the first step but the title as the last.

2) Readers pick up important clues about the purpose and structure of the paper from the introduction.

The introduction should answer the following questions:

- What issue are you going to study?
- What does this issue matter? What is its social, political, cultural, or economic significance?
- What is your research question? Why is your question worth asking?
- What cases will you use? How will these cases help you to answer your question?
- What is your theory? Do you have a raw hypothesis?
- What evidence will you use?

3) Present your thesis statement in the introduction.

How do you answer your research question? A thesis statement focuses your ideas into one or two sentences. It should present the topic of your paper and also make your position in relation to the topic.

Be direct and concise:

- *This paper argues that...*
- *My analysis demonstrates that...*

The thesis statement is not a description or a summary.

- This is a thesis statement: *This paper argues that countries with an abundance of natural resources tend to have less democracy if they have weak institutions.*
- This is not a thesis statement: *In this paper, I will describe political institutions in oil-exporting authoritarian countries.*

4) In the body of the paper, develop your argument, supporting it with evidence.

- For an essay, your analysis should be divided into sections.
- For a thesis, your analysis should be divided into chapters that are further broken down into sections (2-3 per chapter).

5) The conclusion must focus on the following elements:

- The conclusion summarizes your findings. Essentially, you need to remind your readers how you developed your analysis in the body of the paper.
- You also need to restate here your entire thesis that you presented in the introductions. However, this statement should be rephrased.
- Make a call to action when appropriate. What are the directions for further research on your issue? What policy decisions should be made? What can society learn from your research?
- Answer the “so what” question. Argue in support of the importance of your topic again. The conclusion is your opportunity to explain the broader context of the issue that you researched. Why this issue matters? Why is it worth studying?

6) Write an abstract and provide a list of key words.

Once all the work is done, write an abstract and put together a list of key words. An abstract is that provides readers with a quick overview of your paper and its organization. It is presented at the beginning of the paper and is likely the first substantive description of your work read.

- For an essay, you need 100-150 words.
- For a thesis, you need 150-250 words.

7) For a thesis, add an appendix and a glossary of terms, if needed.

Appendices provide supplementary information to the main thesis and should always appear after the references.

You can include in your appendix interview questions, participant letters or forms, surveys or questionnaires, and supplemental tables, figures, graphs, and images.

A glossary and appendices are optional. If you are not sure as to whether or not to include a glossary and appendices, ask your supervisor for advice.

8) For a thesis, a detailed table of contents is required.

The components of the thesis must appear in the table of contents in the same order as in the body of the thesis. There are usually at least two, and often three levels of headings.

Students are encouraged to learn about the capabilities of their word processing software (e.g. MS Word), with most software programs being capable of automatically generating a table of contents if certain style codes are included throughout the text of the paper.

Tables, figures, and illustrations:

- If your thesis has tables, you need a List of Tables.
- If your thesis has figures and/ or illustrations, you need a List of Figures and Illustrations.
- Tables, figures, illustrations must be numbered consecutively, either 1, 2, 3 or with the chapter number included, e.g. 3.1., 3.2., 3.3, etc.

References and Citations

DO NOT PLAGIARIZE. Plagiarism means using the exact words, opinions, or factual information from another person without giving the person credit. Plagiarism is the equivalent of intellectual robbery and cannot be tolerated in the academic setting. Make sure that all your sources are properly cited and referenced.

Whichever style is used for footnotes, endnotes, or in-text references, students must use a consistent style throughout the thesis.

If you are not sure what citation style to choose, ask your supervisor for help.

STEP 4:

Writing, formatting, and presenting your paper

Formatting and structure

Word count for a thesis: 15000-20000 words.

Your paper should be typed, double spaced with 12-pt font, in *Arial* or *Times New Roman*.

Please remember to include page numbers.

The basic structure of your paper:

- Title page (title, name, department, university, supervisor's name, year)
- An original title
- Abstract and key words
- Table of content
- Introduction that includes a thesis statement
- Chapters that are further divided into sections (2-3 per chapter)
- Conclusion
- Reference list
- Appendix (if needed)

Language

1) Use Grammarly (<https://www.grammarly.com/>) or similar **advanced writing tools** for grammar checking and spell checking.

2) Using vague terms makes your writing imprecise and may cause people to interpret it in different ways. **Always try to be as specific as possible.**

Taboo	Example	Alternative
Stuff	People are concerned about their stuff	People are concerned about their (belongings/possessions/personal effects)
Thing	The report presents many things	The report presents many (details/findings/recommendations)
A long time, a while	This topic has interested researchers for a long time	This topic has interested researchers for more than 30 years

3) You avoid using words and phrases that fall into the following categories:

- **Jargon** (i.e., “insider” terminology that may be difficult for readers from other fields to understand)
- **Clichés** (i.e., expressions that are heavily overused, such as “think outside of the box” and “at the end of the day”)
- **Everyday abbreviations** (e.g. photos, fridge, phone, info)
- **Slang** (e.g. cops, cool)
- **Gender-biased language** (e.g. mankind)

4) Avoid using **contractions** (e.g. don’t, can’t, it’s).

5) Avoid **extensive nominalization and passive voice**.

- See 5-minute TED talk about “zombie words” by Helen Sword: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dNikHtMgcPQ>.

6) Academic writing is usually unadorned and direct. **Avoid dramatic vocabulary:**

- adverbs of frequency (such as *always* and *never*);
- superlatives (terms that indicate something is of the highest degree, such as *the best*);
- intensifiers (words that create emphasis, such as *very*)

Those may also not be accurate – are you 100% sure that something is *perfect* or *never* happens? These terms sometimes (rarely!) add value, but try to use them sparingly.

Taboo	Example	Alternative
Always, never	Researchers always argue that	Researchers (frequently/ commonly / typically) argue that
Perfect, best, worst, most (or any other superlative)	The perfect solution to the problem	(An ideal solution/one of the best solutions) to the problem
Very, extremely, really, too, so (or any other intensifier)	This theory is extremely important	This theory is (important/ critical/ crucial)
Beautiful, ugly, wonderful, horrible, good, bad	A review of the literature yielded many good articles	A review of the literature yielded many relevant articles
Obviously, of course	The results obviously indicate	The results clearly indicate
Naturally	The participants naturally wanted to know	The participants wanted to know

Summary: Checklist

Please read carefully, fill in, and include this checklist as the last page of your paper.



Content & research	My paper has an original title.	
	I formulated an argument / thesis statement.	
	THESIS: I used 15 or more academic sources. ESSAY: I used as many academic sources as my assignment required.	
	THESIS: Altogether, I have 20 or more sources. ESSAY: Altogether, I used as many sources as my assignment required.	
Organization & structure	I have an introduction, where I present my argument and an outline of my paper.	
	I have a conclusion that reflects my argument and how it was developed.	
	I divided the main body of my paper into chapters/ sections.	
	My paper has an abstract.	
Presentation	Word count (including references!) THESIS: I wrote at least 15000 words, but no more than 20000 words. ESSAY: I wrote as many words as my assignment requires.	
	I included the word count.	
	My paper is double-spaced with a 12-pt font.	
	My paper has a title page.	
	My paper has page numbers.	
Citations	I cited ALL my sources.	
	My references are clear and consistent.	
Quality of writing	I proofread my paper. Spelling and punctuation are correct.	
	I do not use contractions (e.g. <i>don't</i> and <i>shouldn't</i>) and other taboos of academic writing.	
	I do not cite Wikipedia.	
Checklist	I included this checklist for my paper.	

Congratulations! If you check ALL the boxes, your paper is ready!

Useful links

BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT COUNTRIES:

- BBC Country Profiles:
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm
- CIA World Factbook
<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/index.html>
- U.S. State Department Background Notes/Country Fact Sheets
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/>

FOR QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE:

- *National Identity database, "Making Identity Count" project:*
<https://www.makingidentitycount.org/>

FOR QUALITATIVE EVIDENCE:

- *The Pew Research Center:*
<http://www.pewresearch.org/>
- *Gallup Reports:*
https://news.gallup.com/topic/report.aspx?utm_source=link_wwwv9&utm_campaign=item_224285&utm_medium=copy
- *World Values Surveys (Institute for Comparative Survey Research, Vienna Austria)*
<http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/wvs.jsp>

SOURCES & LITERATURE

- The no-Wikipedia rule:
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wikipedia:Academic_use
- Finding Peer-Reviewed Sources:
<https://guides.library.ualberta.ca/research-writing>
- Finding & evaluating information:
<https://guides.library.ualberta.ca/research-writing/finding-evaluating-sources>
- Google Scholar search tips:
<https://scholar.google.ca/intl/en/scholar/help.html>
- A great YouTube tutorial on Google Scholar:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6vSE- iq7NE>
- Primary vs. Secondary sources:
<https://libguides.ithaca.edu/research101/primary>