



Research Project: an overview

Many programs require you to do a Research Project in your final year. This resource provides a brief overview of what is involved. For more detailed explanations and examples refer to the other Research Project resources.

What is a Research Project?

A Research Project is an independent or collaborative exploration of a topic or issue in your field. You are usually asked to undertake a research project to:

- develop your research skills;
- develop your ability to work individually or collaboratively to solve problems;
- develop your critical thinking, leadership, time management and higher level communication skills;
- build your knowledge and understanding;
- explore answers to questions of great interest to you;
- create new ideas, innovate; and
- gain experience and workplace readiness.

Key steps in undertaking a Research Project

The process is not linear and you may go back and forward through these steps as your project proceeds.

- Define your topic broadly, then narrow down your topic to identify key questions or issues that need to be resolved
- Design your research methods based on these questions
- Read literature connected to your research topic
- Conduct your research - collect information to answer your research question
- Analyse your research data
- You may also be asked to compile a research proposal / plan
- Communicate your research in the research report or paper

Defining your topic

Choose a topic or issue of interest or value to you and decide why this is important to investigate. Identify a gap (i.e., what still needs to be known about this topic).

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Defining your research question/statement

Read the literature on your topic and refining your thinking and understanding to ensure that your research focus is manageable and doable. Clearly state the focus of your research and either present your focus in question or statement format.



Designing your research methods

Identify how you are going to gather information to help you answer your research question. There are various ways to collect information, including organisational review, document analysis, a review of literature, simulations, observations, surveys / questionnaires, interviews or an experiment. You should choose an approach that best suits your topic and question.

Writing up your research report

Below is an example of what a research report might generally include; however, always check your assignment instructions for any specific requirements about what to include.

Preliminary Sections	Title page This is a separate page with the title of the report, your name, student ID and other identifying details as requested.
	Acknowledgements Acknowledge any assistance, editing or contribution by another person or organisation.
	Abstract This is an overview or brief synopsis of the research project. The length depends on the word requirement of your assignment, but is usually 150-250 words.
	Table of contents This is a list of sections/headings in your research report and their page numbers. The heading of this page is <i>Contents</i> . A <i>list of tables</i> and a <i>list of figures</i> may also be included on a separate page if more than a few of each are used.
Main Sections	Introduction This section provides contextual information to set the scene for your research project and usually includes these subsections: background, why this research is needed, the research questions and an outline of your report. The length depends on your word requirement, but is usually 10%.
	Literature Review This is a more detailed presentation of information related to your research project. You will draw on literature related to your topic including journal articles, reports and other scholarly sources.
	Research design (methodology) This section details how you went about answering your research question/s.
	Findings This section includes details of what you discovered through your research into the topic.
	Discussion and/or Conclusion This is the summary and analysis of the major findings, including their implications.
	Recommendations This includes what needs to be done as a consequence of the conclusion.
Further Sections	References This is a list of the references cited in the report. For further guidance about referencing and avoiding plagiarism, check the UniSA website on referencing .
	Appendices (if required) This includes extra materials and is placed at the end of the research report as including them in the main section may distract from the flow of the discussion.

If your report involves collecting research data through existing literature, your report structure will most likely be:

Abstract
Introduction
Methods/procedures
Findings
Discussion/Conclusion
Recommendations
References
Appendices

References

Sanchez, J & Smith, EC 2010, 'Tower Controllers' Response Behavior to Runway Safety Alerts', *Proceedings of the Human Factors and Ergonomics Society Annual Meeting*, vol. 54, no. 1, pp. 50-54.