Information Management Research or Issues paper

What is a research/issues paper?

- A critical exploration of a topic or issue
- It may involve a response to a specific question
- Or it can be more open-ended, where you develop and discuss a particular perspective or argument on a topic or issue
- In this way, your research/issues paper is more than an essay as it involves a higher level or more critical discussion of the topic
- The research/issues paper DOES NOT lead you to develop a research methodology or research instruments (such as questionnaires or surveys)

Research papers are used to:

- situate your topic in the broader context of your field of study
- demonstrate that you are aware of up-to-date and important knowledge of your topic
- develop your ability to locate and use relevant information from credible sources
- develop your critical thinking, reading and writing skills

What are you going to research?

- The “research” component of your research paper relates to searching for, reading and evaluating sources of information relevant to your topic
- You then present this “research” as a critical discussion or argument, in the appropriate format (see below)
- At this level of study you will use credible, scholarly publications, such as journal articles, research reports, government reports and text books.

Critical thinking

- Critical thinking does not mean to criticise or find fault with current research or current literature related to your research questions.
- Critical thinking involves a deeper level of analysis and evaluation of the topic.
  - look at implications of information and give reasons for opinions
  - systematically collect information from a variety of sources - asking questions
  - sort, classify and compare ideas
  - transfer known information to another area and accept multiple answers
  - judge credibility of resources, locate inconsistencies and faulty reasoning
Critical reading

- Critical thinking is connected to critical reading of the literature related to your topic.
  - What credibility does the author have in this field?
  - What is significant or important about this text?
  - What claims are being made?
  - What is the basis of the claims?
  - What evidence is used?
  - How logical are the ideas?
  - Do the conclusions follow from the evidence?
  - How valid and generalisable are the conclusions?

Presenting your research paper

Your research paper is presented in an essay format:

**Introduction**
Introduce topic/context
State argument/main idea
Outline main points

**Body Paragraphs**
Topic sentence
Explanation
Evidence
Example
Concluding sentence

**Conclusion**
Restate argument/main idea
Sum up

*(NOTE: Check your assignment instructions for any specific requirements)*
Introduction

- Introduce your topic broadly
- Explain why this is an important topic worth investigating, discussing or arguing (this is called ‘problematising’, i.e. looking critically at the topic)
- Present your main position or argument in relation to the topic (this is the thesis statement)
- Provide an outline of your research paper to the reader; that is, tell the reader the main points, arguments or ideas you will present in your paper

Example:

Education and literacy have been seen to play such a central role in international development and in tackling global poverty that they have become part of international targets and are central to the mandates of major international organisations. However, due to economic difficulties and the lack of a significant indigenous publishing industry there are rarely the resources available to enable schools to create a literature environment. A common way that NGOs and donors have traditionally attempted to address this lack of resources to support such development is through the donation of surplus Western books and educational material. However, unlike solicited approaches to book donation, recipients of unsolicited donations do not have prior knowledge of the material they are receiving and there is often a lack of consultation with recipients resulting in donations which are largely ‘comprise of the materials that libraries would least wish to receive’ (Otike 1993, p. 12). This paper argues greater scrutiny needs to be paid to book donation approaches and that library aid needs to be looked at from the recipient’s perspective so that library aid donors can be better informed about the people they are serving. Crucial to this is a greater understanding by donors of cultural traits, language barriers and teaching methods of recipients, if there is any hope of addressing the low levels of literacy in developing countries.

Set the scene/context

- Provide the background information so the reader understands where this topic fits in your field and why it is important to discuss it

Problem statement

- The writers problematize the topic, that is that look at it critically.
- Moving from broad to more specific

State your position or argument

- This is called a thesis statement and becomes the controlling idea of your paper
- Everything you present in the body of your paper is explicitly connected to your position or argument
- Notice the objective language – the writers do not use ‘I’ or ‘we’

Outline of the paper

- This tells the reader what you are going to discuss in relation to the discussion, position or argument which you presented in the thesis statement
- Your body paragraphs will explicitly connect to this outline

(Adapted from Anderson & Matthews 2010, pp. 570-572)
Body Paragraph

- Organise your body sections of your research paper into appropriate sections and name them accordingly.
- Introduce your paragraph with a topic sentence; this tells the reader what the focus or main point of discussion in your paragraph is all about.
- Draw on the literature you have found in your research to build a discussion or to support your argument or position.
- Summarise or paraphrase this literature and reference as appropriate.
- When you incorporate the literature into your paragraph you have to do so in a way that demonstrates you actually understand the literature and that you are able to apply this knowledge to your topic; this is called *voice* or *academic voice*.
- Your comments before and after your referenced paraphrases or quotations are considered your *voice*. This is where you demonstrate your understandings by discussing the connection between the knowledge you gained through your readings and your response to the assignment question/topic.

Example:

**Teaching methods**

*The way in which literacy is taught has an impact on a child’s attitude towards reading.* This is illustrated by Elley (1992) who analysed the reading literacy scores of 210,059 students, aged 9 and 14, from 9,073 schools across 32 national systems of education, alongside background questionnaires the children completed about their reading at home and at school, and questionnaires filled in by the teachers about themselves and their teaching. He found that in high-scoring countries reading was seen as a pleasant and imaginative activity whereas in low-scoring countries ‘reading is perceived as hard work that requires a lot of disciplined effort’ (Elley, 1992, p. 89). It is clear from Elley’s findings that the approach taken to reading within the school curriculum impacts on literacy success, and that the modes of teaching that result in higher literacy scores are those that foster positive attitudes towards reading.

(Adapted from Anderson & Matthews 2010, p. 574)
Conclusion

- Restate the aim or focus of the paper
- Restate your main position or argument
- Summarise the points from your body paragraphs which you presented in support of your position or argument

Example:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restatement of the broad topic</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Just as a modernisation philosophy applied to development in general can underplay the importance of human capabilities and contexts, the book donation model when not matched to need and supported with capacity building falls short in its ability to contribute to global priorities for human development. Book donations and enthusiasm from the stakeholders is not sufficient. Donors, working alongside governments must work with information professionals and education experts in ways that understand and utilise the recipient community in order to engage everyone in reading. Western donors must not make assumptions about the community they wish to assist. Thorough consultation with all stakeholders is crucial if inaccurate presumptions that undermine the aims of a project are to be avoided.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restatement of the thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Summary of major points raised in the paper</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Adapted from Anderson & Matthews 2010, pp. 580-583)

Additional resources:
Visit the module [Improving your academic skills](#) for more information about:
- Understand Assignments and Instruction words (see Planning section)
- Assignment planning (see Planning section)
- Proofreading your assignment (see Writing section)
- Linking words and phrases (see Writing section)
- Reading and note-taking (see Reading section)

For resources on referencing (including UniSA Harvard and APA referencing styles) and academic integrity, go to [UniSA’s referencing website](#).

To understand more about finding and choosing scholarly sources, check out the [UniSA library’s training videos](#) on the library’s website.

[Writing a research paper](#) (SUNY Empire State College)

References