

Paper template: Research Design

You can use this template to structure your term paper and term paper idea presentation. It is important to know that this is a merely one template or suggestion for writing a term paper. Depending on your specific research idea, some party may be more / less important than others.

Introduction

The introduction should act as a one-stop-shop for grasping your paper, i.e. it should contain briefly introduce your topic of inquiry and your research question, provide a summary of why your research design is relevant to the reader / literature and provide an overview of what you will be doing in your paper. An introduction should make up roughly 10% of your paper.

- What is your paper about?
- What is your research question / goal / contribution? What do you want to find out / intend to do?
- Why should we care about your research question / goal?
- What information will we find in the remainder of the paper / which steps do you intend to take to answer your question?

Literature review / embedding in the literature

The literature review section is used to show how your paper fits in with the existing research. This can help you strengthen the contribution of your paper by providing some context and a deeper introduction to your topic of interest. The extent of this section heavily depends on your topic and previous research in the area. If you intend to speak to a well-established literature on a very specific topic, this might be a little longer to provide the reader with enough context whereas it might be shorter if you engage with a novel topic / approach. In general, the literature review should help you make your case and be restricted to your specific question. E.g., if you intend to do research on the legislative process in the EU, you don't need to talk about the emergence of the EU as an institution throughout time (unless this is directly relevant to your argument, of course).

- What do we need to know to understand your research?
- Are there any previous works in the research area that you rely on?
- Is there a 'gap' in the literature?
- Why is it important / interesting to answer your research question / goal?

Theoretical framework

When answering your research question (particularly for explanatory research), you typically rely on a set of assumptions about your topic on inquiry. This section should clearly state these assumptions and the 'lens' through which you engage with your topic. E.g., if you analyze MP speeches, you can look at the speeches from a psychological, linguistic or a purely political / policy point of view. Your research design and expectations usually heavily depend on the theoretical approach you take. For explanatory

research, you usually have a set of expectations (hypothesis) with regards to what you will observe that you can derive from your theory that you subsequently aim to test with your research.

- What perspective do you approach your topic from?
- What are the key assumptions of the approach you take?
- Given your theory, what do you expect to observe?
- What is the argument behind your expectations? Why would you expect to observe a given outcome?

Not necessary, but might be helpful:

- How can you visualize your argument?

Research design

This section is the ‘recipe’ for your paper. The research design section should specify how you intend to answer your research question / test your expectations in details. This means, you need to specify what kind of data you will be using to perform your analysis, how you plan to obtain your data and why your data is suited to answer your research question. Additionally, depending on the scope / goal of your research, you will need to specify how you plan to analyze your data once you have obtained it and how this analysis will help you answer your research question / test your expectations.

- What is your approach to answering your research questions? How do you intend to do it?
- What data will you be using? How will you obtain the data? Is there a time frame to your data collection?
- What is your *level of analysis* (what does one observation / row in your data represent?)?
- How do you *operationalize* your (theoretical) variables of interest, i.e. how do you intend to measure your phenomenon of interest / your explanatory factors from your data?
- How will you analyze the data?
- What are possible limitations of your approach?