

OEP Research and Industry-based research subjects

A model proposal

Students regularly ask for example proposals. Rather than provide one example only, which would not address the disciplinary variations that occur within an interdisciplinary teaching program, here I have drawn examples from lots of different sorts of research topics.

All are real examples written by OEP students and they are chosen to demonstrate the diverse ways to write in response to each of the proposal criteria.

1. Define the topic	<p>Suggested Approach: Explain in a few sentences the broader context of your research topic. Outline to the reader the current general issues and then take the reader's attention to the more specific issue with which your project is concerned. This may take a paragraph or two.</p> <p>Address the question, what is interesting, topical, currently changing that makes your inquiry significant and relevant?</p> <p>Examples from student proposals "Ecotourism projects are justified by their positive contributions to the local community (Goodwin, 2012) and are envisioned as a part of the process of community development (Hall, 2012). Oppositely it is believed that ecotourism can disrupt indigenous rights, culture and spirituality (Johnson, 2005). This disruption may cause alterations in values, traditional forms of living and societal interactions (Mbaiwa, 2011). In the context of Timor-Leste, a nation 'building', there is an emerging market for tourism with the possibility to attract adventurous travelers willing to explore its natural and cultural environments (Palmer and Carvalho, 2008)... Given that communities across the country are experiencing resurgence in their culture and traditions (Palmer and Carvalho, 2008) it is important to assess the possibility of devising sustainable livelihood strategies for the local communities (Palmer, 2007) for example, in the form of conservation and ecotourism. Also of importance will be an assessment of the ways in which traditional understand of history and social relations enables the communities to embrace the community ecotourism concept"</p>
2. Identify key research questions/hypotheses	<p>Suggested Approach: Be clear and direct here. Tell the reader the exact nature of your inquiry, what is the question your research will address? What is the specific question (or questions) you are asking? ie what do you want to know?</p> <p>You might write this (these) question(s) as a summary point at the end of an</p>

	<p>earlier paragraph – a culmination of the background information and your discussion of the specific issue that you are interested in.</p> <p>You might have a separate section which lists the central question or hypothesis and any subsidiary questions which are relevant.</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>“What is the impact of climate change on dengue distribution in the Asia Pacific region?”</p> <p>“to investigate whether alternative food production and distribution networks can be applied to improve food and nutritional security for dwellers in urban slums in Africa”.</p> <p>“This research project aims to reconstruct the historical geomorphological evolution of Corryong Creek over the past 100 years. This research project also aims to undertake an analysis of the current evolution of the river using its history as context”</p> <p>“The aim of the project is to use statistical methods to identify and compare the impact of water policy raised by the Federal government, the Victorian state government and the Murray Darling Basin Authority from 1901 to 2012 in relation to environmental flows”</p> <p>“The research objectives include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Assess temporal changes in water quality concentrations in streams of different degrees of stormwater-derived degradation over a decade of increasing drought followed by 3 years of average rainfall” b) Assess if the relationship between stream discharge and water quality varies among streams of different degrees of degradation”. <p>“ Primary question How do the values and beliefs of Indian Australians at Melbourne University influence their concern for climate change?</p> <p>Related questions How do they decide that climate change is worthy of attention? How is this different from how young Australians decide that climate change is worthy of attention? How can they be engaged on this issue”</p>
<p>3. Outline the scope of the project</p>	<p>Suggested Approach</p> <p>This is where you discuss the specific parameters of your research – timelines, scale, location. You need to indicate that you have a plan for finding out the answers to the questions you have and that the scope of research you are proposing makes sense.</p>

	<p>In a sentence or two, perhaps a paragraph or two, you might identify the timescale of your research, the conceptual basis for the research, a rationale based on the absence of available information in the literature, the methodological approach in general terms (eg qualitative, quantitative, mixed).</p> <p>Examples</p> <p>“ My research project will take place over two semesters. The initial semester will involve a desk-based study of the TIPNIS dispute, Bolivian resource politics and broader Latin American territorial turn towards recognizing indigenous rights. I am to have a contextualized overview of the TIPNIS dispute, of at least 6,000-8,000 words ready for submission to an academic journal by Nov...”</p> <p>“Present fluvial form is influenced by both past and present conditions. Therefore it is important to investigate the history of a river, in addition to making contemporary observations. As a result dominant variables that influence fluvial geomorphology will be revealed”.</p> <p>“This project will look at a specific, bounded rural region of Victoria: the Strezlecki Bioregion. The analysis will be based on institutional/organizational perspectives of the drivers of rural land use change and landscape visions drawing on the ideas about rural landscape typologies (Barr, 2002, 2003, 2005), multifunctional rural landscapes (Holmes, 2008; Wilson, 2001), the constructions of nature (Castree, 2005), region-based governance structures (Marshall, 2008) and the political saliency of the meso-scale relative to the micro and macro scale policy and management”</p> <p>“In a study of Melbourne streams, (Hatt et al, 2004) identified that baseflow and high flow pollutant concentrations were best explained by stormwater drainage connection and therefore most likely by urban stormwater runoff. However, the relationship between stream flow and pollutant concentrations along a gradient of urban stormwater inputs remain unclear. ... changes in water quality over the corresponding period and the role this may have played in the observed macro invertebrate assemblage decline is poorly understood”</p>
<p>4. Detail the methodology and specific research tasks</p>	<p>Suggested Approach:</p> <p>In a paragraph or two, perhaps in a table, you should provide specific indications of the research you will undertake. Identify the data set you will use, the type of analysis you will undertake of it, the number of people you will interview, the documents you will draw key information from. This discussion may well merge with the above discussion about the scope of your project.</p>

Tips:

- It is important to demonstrate that your research approach is logical and will produce information in the time available that enables you to answer your questions.
- It is also important to consider the financial or other resources (labs, vehicles, access to sites) that you require to conduct the research as your project cannot proceed if you do not have adequate resources.

Examples:

“The proposed methodology is to review academic literature, government and NGO reports to extract, summarise and extrapolate information relevant to the improvement of food security for slum dwellers”

“Numerical methods such as multi-criteria analysis have been adopted in the process of evaluating the performance of policy’s and planning especially in the process of decision making (Hajkowicz and Collins, 2006). These kinds of methods have the advantage of clearly illustrating the impact and provide the possibility for analysis of variables from different disciplines. In this study, numerical methods are adopted to help analyse the impact of policy on environmental flow”

“This project will adopt a case study methodology to demonstrate/illustrate meso-scale narratives around rural land use change that exist in relation to a region in Victoria that includes small settlements, rural and periurban areas and urban centres. It will draw on raw data....semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders (local council strategic planners, state government departmental representatives)”.

“Data collection will be conducted during July –August. The following data are available.... A rainfall runoff model will be developed for each site in collaboration with hydrologists in the waterway ecosystem research group. This model will help to compare each water quality record with a discharge measurement. During Sept temporal trends in water quality variables will be assessed using generalized additive models that can provide robust and accurate statistical inference from the analysis of hydrological time-series data (Nathan et al 1999). Statistics summarizing water quality concentrations and their relationships with flow will be derived for each study stream and differences between degraded and forested streams will be assessed by generalized models”.

“Interview type: Semi-structured interviews using a question guide conducted face to face and recorded using a Dictaphone and later transcribed. Additional notes will also be taken during conducting the interviews. The interviews will have an approximate duration of one hour”.

“The study will be based only on secondary resources due to limited size and timeframes of the research project. Literature in the form of books, articles,

	journals and websites will be reviewed extensively”
<p>5. Acknowledge Ethics and Risk Assessment requirements</p>	<p>Suggested Approach This requirement may not need to be addressed. It is included as a prompt to students and supervisors to consider the requirements for ethics and to be clear about the timelines for relevant ethics procedures. Research cannot proceed without ethics approval, and you need to be sure to obtain that approval in time for you to successfully undertake your research.</p> <p>Examples “Yes – pending. Applications in my supervisor’s faculty are considered every two months and I will have my ethics application ready in time for the end of May meeting”.</p> <p>“The questionnaire is expected to be submitted ideally by 28th of this month and if this fails by the end of June. This project will deal with consenting adults, which will be accordingly informed. This is a low risk project”.</p>
<p>6. Identify initial expected outcomes</p>	<p>Suggested Approach</p> <p>What is the contribution of your research? What will we know at the end of it?</p> <p>This might be a sentence or two. It might appear very early in the proposal in with the discussion about the nature of your project, or at the end as suggested here. It is not a statement about the conclusion of your project. Rather it is about what new understandings will emerge from your research; these can be filling a research gap that you have identified, developing a new method for assessing something, improving our understanding of something else.</p> <p>Examples “...extend political ecological academic work in Bolivia to the department of Beni where the road is being built. Contextualize this process with reference to other academic studies around Bolivia’s new politics of indigeneity and geographies of nature... Contribute to the growing literature investigating the extension of hydrocarbon and infrastructure geographies...”</p> <p>“These conclusions are insightful for scientific reasons, but will also benefit river management of similar sites. The environmental conditions at Corryong Creek are representative of many rivers within Victoria and globally, and thus lessons from this study area may be useful for managing similar rivers. For instance, knowing the level of importance of each explanatory variable and their interrelationships could act as a guide for management priorities”.</p>

	<p>“This research will be the first to attempt to provide longitudinal analysis of the impact of historical policies on environmental flow”</p> <p>“It will provide an additional layer of analysis to the socio economic drivers of agricultural land use change from an institutional, strategic context”</p> <p>“The study will develop a common framework of dengue prevention to evaluate a country’s position and capacity in controlling dengue”.</p> <p>“This study will improve our understanding of the combined effects of drought and urban stormwater runoff on temperate Australian streams. This knowledge will aid in the effective management and restoration of urban stream water quality and ecology in times of varying climate and land use change”.</p>
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