Guidelines for Research Proposal

Here are the guidelines to help you see what a research proposal is and looks like. The journal articles you are reading for some of the Assignments do what you are doing for the research proposal. They may use different headings, but study them very closely and you will notice that the structure of those articles parallels the structure that you will use in creating your research proposal. The headings you will use in your research proposal are different from what you may find in the articles but they are similar. The difference is that the research articles you are reading carry out the research. You won't be executing your research. You will only be setting it up; hence, it is called a proposal. It's like a marriage proposal even though you're not quite married yet.

The length of the research proposal is between 8 and 10 pages, NOT including the title and reference pages. Hence, your proposal will be about 10 to 12 pages in total. The sample proposal is 12 pages; 10 pages of content plus the cover and reference pages. It should be noted that your paper must have a cover page that includes the course title, my name, the due date of the paper, the title, and your name.

You’re required to write a research proposal that MUST include each of the following sections: (1) Introduction; (2) Literature Review; (3) Methodology; (4) Expected Results; (5) Implications for Criminal Justice Policy; (6) Limitations; and (7) References.

(1) Introduction (1 page; 15 points)
- What is the issue or problem and why is the issue important?
- Is there any criminal justice policy regarding the issue?
- What are the purpose and importance of your proposal?

(2) Literature Review (2-3 pages; 20 points)
- How have other researchers in criminal justice and criminology approached the issue?
- What kind of research methods did they use and what did they find?
- What does the existing literature suggest to you in shaping your question?

(3) Methodology (3 - 4 pages; 30 points)
- Based on what you found in the literature, what is your hypothesis? What is your independent and dependent variable? How are they defined conceptually and operationally? (about 1 page; 10 points)
- What is your population? How will you sample? What is your unit of analysis? If you are conducting research with human subjects what about IRB approval? (about 1 page; 10 points)
- What method will you use (experiment, survey, field, agency records?) Explain in detail. (1-2 pages; 10 points)

(4) Expected Results (about 1 page; 10 points)
- What do you think you will find and why?
(5) Implications for Criminal Justice Policy (about 1 page; 10 points)

- Thinking about your expected results, if criminal justice agencies decided to take your research and implement it, what implications would there be? What might happen to crime, criminals, victims, communities, for example. What economic or legal consequences might occur? Might the program result in something that is less expensive that current policy? Think BIG.

(6) Limitations (1 page; about 10 points)

- Remember, all social science research is probabilistic (see Ch 1 for that). All social science research - including criminal justice research - has error. What sources of error do you see in your research? Remember, translating you concepts from the conceptual to the operational is a source of error (see Ch 3). If your research covers a long time period, is attrition an issue (Ch 5)? Do you see any ethical issues in your research? The point here is to be critical of oneself before others are of you. If you had the opportunity to do it all over again, what might you do differently?

(7) References (1 page; 5 points)

- Here make sure you list at least EIGHT references you use in your paper. At least FIVE of those references must be academically refereed journal articles. Make sure you list them in alphabetical order AND you format them in American Psychological Association (APA) style.

You MUST use Times New Roman, 12 font, 1" margins on all sides, and double space - no exceptions. If you do NOT follow all of these three requirements, it will result in the drop of FIVE points of your paper grade per requirement violation.

You MUST submit your proposal as a Word document or rtf (rich text file if you use Word Perfect).

You MUST use at least EIGHT sources including FIVE academically refereed journal articles for your literature review. If you are unsure what constitutes an academically refereed journal article ask a librarian. An academically refereed journal can be succinctly defined in this way: A periodical that only includes articles that have been evaluated by experts in the field. These publications are usually issued two to four times a year; are published by a university or scholarly press; include footnotes, bibliographies, or references; and list author(s) and his/her/their credentials.

Magazines such as Police Chief, Corrections Today, and American Jails are NOT academically refereed journals. Most of the articles in the magazines are written by criminal justice practitioners (police officers, corrections staff who work in jails, prison, probation or parole). The magazines are published by practitioner organizations (International Association of Chiefs of Police, American Correctional Association, and American Jail Association, respectively), not scholarly organizations and associations. Periodicals like TIME, NEWSWEEK,
PEOPLE, etc. are NOT academically refereed journals either. Nor are newspapers. Make sure you know and understand what IS and what IS NOT an academically refereed journal.

Use the Style Manual of the American Psychological Association to format your paper, cite your sources, cite direct quotes, and compose your reference page. Here is the link to APA: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/01/.

Writing Center Info: Specially selected and trained graduate assistants and peer tutors who offer one-on-one conferences about writing and reading are available to help you in the ASU Writing Center. The Writing Center works with students from any discipline, at any skill level, and on any stage of the writing or reading process. The mission of the Writing Center is to help you become better writers and readers. I recommend that you use the center to help you prepare your research proposal.

Here is the link to the ASU Writing Center: http://www.angelo.edu/dept/writing_center/

You will NOT conduct this research. IT IS ONLY A PROPOSAL. Reading the sample research paper that we posted for you will help you understand how the research proposal will look and how the seven major headings are formatted (bold and centered).

Upon completion of your research proposal, submit your research proposal electronically via the Digital Dropbox in Blackboard. Your research proposal is due by 11:59 p.m. on Friday of Week 9. I will apply the following penalties for a late submission of your paper:

- Less than 8 hours: 10% reduction
- 8 – 48 hours: 25% reduction
- 48 – 72 hours: 50% reduction
- Greater than 72 hours: 75% reduction

[NOTE] The professor reserves the right to submit your proposal to TURNITIN.COM for preventing plagiarism.
**Problem Statements**

1. **Introduction:** A problem statement is a question you want to answer. For example, your topic may deal with death penalty in the world. *The problem you want to address may be “Why is the death penalty higher in the U.S. than in other nations?”*

2. **Guidelines For Writing Problem Statements**
   a. State the problem in a complete grammatical sentence.
   b. State the problem so well that anyone, anywhere, can read, understand, and react to the statement without benefit of your presence.
   c. State your research problem so that the purpose of your research is clear.

3. **What To Avoid When Writing Your Problem Statement**
   a. **Meaningless half-statements**
      i. Do not write your problem statement as a meaningless half-statement.
         Consider the following statement, for example: "Poverty and Crime."
      ii. This statement gives the reader very little to go by. It also provokes questions, such as:
         1. What is the purpose of the study?
         2. What is the purpose of the study?
         3. Where will the student conduct the study?
         4. Who are the participants in the study?
         5. **Better:** "The purpose of this study is to determine the effect that poverty has on the crime problem in the 50 largest cities in the U.S. and to identify ways to alleviate observed problems."
   b. **Yes/no statements**
      i. Generally, questions you can answer with a simple yes or no are not appropriate research problems.
      ii. Why/because statements are good.
   c. **Opinion expression:** Instead of expressing a research problem, some students express an opinion that they want to defend or prove. For example, "The crime control model is better than the rehabilitation model.”
i. This statement is simply stated as an opinion.

ii. **Better:** "The purpose of this study is to identify differences between the rehabilitation model and crime control model in order to identify reasons why the crime control model has dominated the U.S. criminal justice policy and practices since 1980s."

4. **Final Comments**
   a. Make sure your problem is limited.
   b. Do not attempt to research too much.
   c. Limit your study to a manageable geographical area with a limited population.
   d. Remember to consider your time and resources allocations.
Topics for Research Proposal

There's no end to the ideas you could have for your research proposal. The main thing is to propose something that you can get your teeth into, that you think you might like to actually do if you had the chance. Although remember, for this course, you are not collecting the data. You are only designing the idea. Designing the idea is the most important part of research. It's how you think of the question that's important. It's the sources that you go to learn more about your idea that is important. It's how you shape the hypothesis that's important. It's how you choose your variables and define them conceptually and operationally that is important. It's how you think about your population, sample, and unit of analysis that is important. It's how you choose the method that is appropriate to study your question that is important. After that, you can probably train any fifth grader to carry it out. I am not saying that implementation isn't important because it truly is. But what I am saying is unless the idea is properly conceived it doesn't matter how well you carry out a bad idea.

If you need some ideas to get you going, here's a list things you can think about

1) **Correlates of Crime. How are these factors associated with crime?**

   a) Race/ethnicity: Is race related to crime?
   b) Gender: Are women more likely to commit child abuse than men?
   c) Age: How is school performance related to delinquency?
   d) Poverty/economic inequality: How does the economy affect crimes?
   e) Places: Is there more crime in neighborhoods that have yard/garage sales than neighborhoods that don't?

2) **Types of Crime**

   a) Murder/Homicide
   b) Sexual Assault/Rape
   c) Aggravated Assault
   d) Property Crime (Burglary/Larceny/Auto Theft)
   e) White-Collar Crime
   f) Corporate Crime (e.g. Enron)
   g) Occupational Crime (e.g. medical fraud)
   h) Governmental Crime (e.g. political scandal, corruption, police brutality)
   i) Financial crime (e.g. insider trading)
   j) Terrorism
   k) Juvenile Delinquency
   l) Juvenile Gang
   m) Juvenile Substance Abuse
   n) Teenage Prostitution
   o) Drug Abuse
   p) Spouse Abuse
   q) Cyber Crime
   r) Hate Crime
s) Serial Murder
t) Child Molestation/Juvenile Sex Offender 
u) Organized Crime
v) Drug Trafficking
w) Drunk Driving
x) Stalking

3) Issues in the Criminal Justice System

a) Community Policing
b) Racial Profiling
c) Deadly Force
d) Citizen Complaints of Abuse of Police Power
e) Crime Mapping
f) Traditional/New Measurement of Police Performance
g) Effective Police Crime Prevention
h) Duke Trial (Ethics for Prosecution)
i) Effectiveness of Zero-Tolerance School Policies on Delinquency Deterrence/Reduction
j) Effect of Incarceration on Crime Deterrence/Reduction
k) Effectiveness of Traditional Probation/Parole
l) Effectiveness of Intensive Supervised Probation/Parole
m) Effectiveness of House Arrest with Electronic Monitoring?
n) Effectiveness of Drug Courts
o) Effectiveness of Teen Courts
p) Effectiveness of Prisoner Reentry Programs
q) Effect of Death Penalty on Crime Deterrence/Reduction
You need to familiarize yourselves with research in academic journals to understand the following logical sequence: establishing a problem, reviewing the literature, determining what needs to be known, creating a research methodology and collecting data, analyzing the data, and making conclusions about the results.

By examining research articles, a standard approach to how we develop knowledge becomes quickly evident. Actually, the sequence itself can even become rather boring after reading too many research pieces. But, that is precisely what you need to understand: Research is systematic, patterned, and logical. Your task, and that of other researchers, is to look for flaws in that process.

Literature related to crime, criminology, and the criminal justice system may be found in journals in a wide range of disciplines. This will include criminal justice and criminology journals, and publications focusing on police, courts, juvenile delinquency, drugs, violence, victims, and corrections. Many sociological journals, no matter what their espoused emphasis, publish crime/delinquency related research. Also law journals, as well as journals in psychology, philosophy, political science, and social work will be useful.

Some of the most commonly used journals for publications in criminology and criminal justice are listed below. The list, however, is purposefully a short one. If you want to see a comprehensive list, check out the latest version of an annotated journal list created by Michael S. Vaughn, Rolando V. del Carmen, Martin Perfecto, and Ka Xiong Charand (2004, Journals in Criminal Justice and Criminology: An Updated and Expanded Guide for Authors. Journal of Criminal Justice Education, 15, 1, 61–192).

- American Journal of Criminal Justice
- American Journal of Sociology
- American Political Science Review
- American Sociological Review
- Australian & New Zealand Journal of Criminology
- British Journal of Criminology
- Crime and Delinquency
- Criminal Justice and Behavior
- Criminal Justice Policy Review
- Criminology: An Interdisciplinary Journal
- Criminology and Public Policy
- Federal Probation
- Homicide
- International Journal of Comparative and Applied Criminal Justice
- International Journal of Comparative Criminology
- International Journal of Offender Therapy & Comparative Criminology
- Journal of Contemporary Criminal Justice
MAGAZINES AND TRADE JOURNALS

Because most magazines and trade journals do not go through an extensive referee process, they usually have a rapid publication process but are short on research studies. Still, they sometimes have basic research studies with the most recent population statistics and up-to-date information on programs. Many of the policies and programs popular in addressing crime-related issues are found in these reports. One use of these sources is in helping you to locate examples of less sophisticated research and statistical analyses. Some of the most useful trade journals are:

- American Jails
- American Probation and Parole Association Perspectives
- Corrections Today
- Police Chief

GOVERNMENT PUBLICATIONS

There are many useful government publications for illustrating the use of descriptive statistics, and in particular graphical techniques. For example, Texas Department of Criminal Justice annual report should give current statistics about offenders both demographically, and by the various offense types. The Bureau of Justice Statistics, the National Institute of Corrections and the National Institute of Justice all publish timely pamphlets and regular reports in the areas of drugs, violence prevention, use of weapons, incarceration, juvenile delinquency, and new innovations in fighting crime. Many of these use elementary statistical techniques.