

AP Research Performance Task: Academic Paper and Presentation and Oral Defense

Task Overview

In AP Research, you will further the skills you acquired in the AP Seminar course by learning research methodology, employing ethical research practices, and accessing, analyzing, and synthesizing information as you address a research question/project goal. You will conduct research and implement a developed or chosen inquiry methodology to design, plan, and conduct an in-depth study or investigation of an area of your own interest, culminating in a paper of 4,000–5,000 words that includes the following elements:

- ▶ Introduction
- ▶ Method, Process, or Approach
- ▶ Results, Product, or Findings
- ▶ Discussion, Analysis, and/or Evaluation
- ▶ Conclusion and Future Directions
- ▶ Bibliography

Throughout the course, you will document and reflect upon the research process and your communication with your teacher and any outside expert adviser(s) using a process and reflection portfolio (PREP).

In addition to completing your research paper, you will:

- ▶ arrange for a viewing of additional scholarly work (where applicable)
- ▶ deliver a presentation (using appropriate media)
- ▶ defend your research design, approach, and findings

Task Directions

1. Question, Proposal, and Research

- ▶ Identify a research question/project goal of your own choosing in an area of personal interest.
- ▶ Gather initial information for background and context on your research question/project goal and area of personal interest.
- ▶ Choose or design a research method and identify resources to develop your research proposal.
- ▶ Submit a proposal form to receive approval prior to starting your inquiry.
- ▶ Gather additional information, data, and evidence through a carefully chosen and aligned research method.
- ▶ Describe what you hope to learn, achieve, and/or create as a result of your inquiry.

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- ▶ With your teacher's assistance, connect with one or more discipline-specific expert advisers (internal or external to the school) to advise you through the development of your inquiry processes (if your inquiry warrants the use of a field expert or discipline-specific expert adviser).
- ▶ Maintain a portfolio of your inquiry processes, your communication with your teacher and expert adviser(s), and reflections on your thought processes and any successes and challenges you encounter.

2. Academic Paper

- ▶ Analyze, evaluate, and select evidence to develop a logical, well-reasoned argument or aesthetic rationale and conclusion in an academic paper of 4,000–5,000 words that addresses the research question/project goal and conveys your perspective and new understanding as a result of engaging in your research process.
- ▶ You must avoid plagiarism by acknowledging, attributing, and/or citing sources throughout the paper and by including a bibliography. Graphs, data tables, images, appendices, abstract, and the bibliography are not part of the total word count for the academic paper.

Your academic paper must contain the required elements described in the table below and should be presented in a style and structure appropriate to the discipline in which your research topic resides.

Required Element	Description
Introduction	<p>Provides background and contextualizes the research question/project goal and your initial assumptions and/or hypotheses.</p> <p>Introduces and reviews previous work in the field, synthesizing information and a range of perspectives related to the research question/project goal.</p> <p>Identifies the gap in the current field of knowledge to be addressed.</p>
Method, Process, or Approach	Explains and provides justification for the chosen method, process, or approach.
Results, Product, or Findings	Presents the findings, evidence, results, or product.
Discussion, Analysis, and/or Evaluation	<p>Interprets the significance of the results, product, or findings; explores connections to original research question/project goal.</p> <p>Discusses the implications and limitations of the research or creative work.</p>
Conclusion and Future Directions	<p>Reflects on the process and how this project could impact the field.</p> <p>Discusses possible next steps.</p>
Bibliography	Provides a complete list of sources cited and consulted in the appropriate disciplinary style.

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3. Presentation and Oral Defense

- ▶ Develop a 15–20 minute presentation (using appropriate media) and deliver it to an oral defense panel. If your academic paper is accompanied by an additional piece of scholarly work (e.g., performance, exhibit, product), you will arrange for the teacher and panelists to view this work prior to the presentation. In your presentation, you should:
 - › showcase your research question/project goal, method, and conclusions
 - › focus on the evidence or data collected to address your research question/project goal
 - › illustrate the connections between the evidence you chose to support or refute your initial assumptions/hypotheses and the development of your overall conclusion or argument
 - › engage your audience using appropriate strategies (e.g., eye contact, vocal variety, emphatic gestures, movement)
 - › use a medium and design specifically tailored to engage your audience and illustrate your points. Please note, your audience (oral defense panel) may consist of both experts and non-experts.
- ▶ Following your presentation, you will defend your research/artistic processes; argument/aesthetic rationale; use of evidence or discipline-specific information; analysis; evaluation; and conclusions, solutions, or recommendations through oral responses to three or four questions asked by the oral defense panelists. Three of these questions will be chosen from the oral defense question list, which will be provided to you in advance. The presentation and oral defense should take no longer than 15–20 minutes total.

Oral Defense Questions

The panel will ask one question pertaining to your research or inquiry process, one question focused on your depth of understanding, and one question about your reflection throughout the inquiry process as evidenced in your process and reflection portfolio (PREP). The fourth question and any follow-up questions are at the discretion of the panel. Your responses to each question should be brief and concise (no more than a few minutes).

Research/Inquiry Process

- ▶ After you chose your research question/project goal, which information guided your choice of a research method/artistic process?
- ▶ How is the method/process you chose aligned with the purpose of your research? Which methods did you consider and reject?
- ▶ What were the strategies you used to conduct a review of the literature or gather information from the discipline-specific field? Why did you select those strategies? Which strategies did you consider and reject?
- ▶ How did you evaluate the sources you collected to make sure they would be credible, valid, and reliable? Which sources did you discard, and why?
- ▶ What was one obstacle or challenge you encountered while implementing your research method, and how did you address it?
- ▶ What was the most important source of information you found while conducting your research, and why was it important to your research process?

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Depth of Understanding

- ▶ What was the fundamental argument/idea in your research? How does this argument/idea relate to the primary purpose of your research?
- ▶ Which of the various perspectives you explored was the most difficult for you to incorporate into your research inquiry, and why?
- ▶ What criteria did you use to discriminate among the perspectives in order to reach a conclusion?
- ▶ How might your conclusions/findings/product relate(s) to the current body of work in the community or field?
- ▶ What might be the real-world implications or consequences (influence on others' behaviors, decision-making processes, or discoveries) related to your findings?
- ▶ What additional questions emerged during your research? Based on your recent experience, what advice would you give to other researchers who might choose to investigate those questions?

Reflection Throughout the Inquiry Process

- ▶ Which of your sources was the most influential, and in what way is that influence apparent in your final conclusion or result?
- ▶ In which specific part of your research process was your expert adviser most helpful, and how was he or she most helpful? What did you learn from the expert adviser about your field of research? Note: do not ask this question if the student did not engage with an expert adviser.
- ▶ If you could revisit the research process, what would you do differently? Would you choose a different area of inquiry, and if so, why? If you would choose the same research question/project goal, what different methods or approaches would you use?
- ▶ If you had three more months to work on this research question/project goal, what additional research strategies would you put into practice?
- ▶ Think about the initial curiosity that led to your inquiry. What other areas of inquiry might that same curiosity lead to?
- ▶ What unanticipated turn did you encounter as your research progressed? What were the reasons for this change in direction or focus, and how did you modify your method or approach?

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