ED 422 229   SO 029 092

AUTHOR   Medina, Suzanne L.
TITLE   Facilitating the Research Paper Process: A Guide for the
                  Social Science Instructor.
PUB DATE   1994-00-00
NOTE   32p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the National
                  Social Science Association (Las Vegas, NV, April
                  11-13,1997).
PUB TYPE   Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Speeches/Meeting Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE   MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS   Data Analysis; Higher Education; *Library Research;
                  *Research Papers (Students); *Social Science Research;
                  Student Research; Undergraduate Study; Writing Assignments
IDENTIFIERS   *California State University Dominguez Hills

ABSTRACT
        This paper describes the approach used successfully at
California State University, Dominguez Hills, to instruct college students in
the research paper writing process. To achieve the results, the instructor
followed a specific set of steps during a class meeting set aside for this
specialized training. This paper details each step in the instructional
process. By using this outline as a guide, student researchers are guided
through the term paper writing process with the hope of significantly
increasing the quality of term papers. (EH)

Facilitating the Research Paper Process :
A Guide for the Social Science Instructor

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Facilitating the Research Paper Process :
A Guide for the Social Science Instructor

Professors of all disciplines are well aware of the difficulty which some students

experience when attempting to write the research or term paper. Students frequently

enter the social science classroom ill-equipped to engage in such an assignment.

Consequently, for the students, the process is perplexing, frustrating and painful. The

professor is equally frustrated by reading papers which are poorly organized, lacking

substance and riddled with mechanical errors. While all are aware that this problem

exists, there appear to be few viable solutions.

Currently-Used Solutions

Two solutions prevail currently. One frequently used solution to the problem is for

the professor to direct students to books on the topic of term paper writing. There are

two problems associated with this solution. First, realistically, the majority of students

tend not to consult a reference book on the topic even when they are advised to.

Second, while several student reference books on term paper writing exist, the vast

majority describe aspects of the process in unnecessary detail, while overlooking other

areas which are critical for students requiring guidance and direction (Aldrich, 1976;

Campbell, 1990; Gibaldi, 1988; James, 1980; Lenmark-Ellis, 1989; Lester, 1992; Riebel,

1972; Turabian, 1973; Yaggy, 1985). In short, many of these references do not succeed

at providing the guidance which many students are in need of.

Some professors find the experience so exacerbating that they have abandoned the

practice of assigning term papers altogether. While this is a practical solution to the

problem, it is not one which comes without a price. When a professor refrains from

assigning the research paper, students are deprived of developing a critical and valuable skill. Furthermore, research paper writng is fundamental to a college education.

What then, can the professor of social science do in order to dramatically improve the quality of research papers which are generated by students ? If only the professor had two elements: (1) class time that could be devoted to training students in the skill of research paper writing, and (2) class materials which could be used for the purpose of training students in this skill.

A Local Problem and Situation

Historically, students enrolled in a course in multicultural education at California State University, Doinguez Hills produced term papers which lacked the rigor which one would expect at the college level. Term paper organization was lacking, reference sources were not properly cited in the text, and there were innumerable mechanical errors. Additionally, students struggled with comprehending the process of identifying and locating reference materials in the library. Yet, the problems which these students encountered were typical of those reported by professors of other disciplines at other colleges and universities.

As a result of noting these problems with the research paper process, it was determined to devote a minimum of one class session (2 and 1/2 hours) to training students in the skill of writing term papers. Since only one class period could be devoted to instructing students in this skill, no time could be wasted. The approach had to fulfill certain characteristics. It needed to be sufficiently simple so that all students could acquire the skill. Also, since the vast majority of student learners were visual, it was critical to construct a visual representation of the steps in the term paper writing

process so that students could use the model as a guide while they progressed through the various steps. Lastly, to facilitate the task of writing a research paper, any and all short-cuts needed to be incorporated into the model.

A research paper writing approach which met all of the above-mentioned characteristics was developed for college students in the multicultural course. As a result of using this approach for the past 3 years, the quality of student term papers has significantly improved. Research papers are better structured, organized, and contain fewer mechanical errors. The content is more substantive and there is greater attention to detail. Furthermore, students take greater pride in their final product and are appreciative of the skills they have learned in the process.

Purpose of this Paper

The purpose of this paper is to describe the approach which was successfully used at California State University, Dominguez Hills to instruct college students in the research paper writing process. In order to achieve results, the instructor followed a specific set of steps during a class meeting which had been set aside for this specialized training. In this paper, each step in the instructional process will be described. By using this outline as a guide, other professors of social science can guide their students through the term paper writing process, and in so doing significantly increase the quality of student term papers.

Overview of the Research Paper Process Model

Central to this approach of instructing students is the Research Paper Writing Model. This model was generated after having studied an expert's knowledge and behavior as she wrote a research paper. Consequently, this model represents a streamlined, time-efficient strategy to the research writing process. Furthermore, it incorporates techniques which produce research papers of the highest quality. Because the model delineates in great detail each major step in the process of writing the term paper, it provides direction for those students who require it. It assumes no prior knowledge of the procedure.

According to this model, the research writing process consists of ten basic steps. As Diagram 1 illustrates, each step is described in terms of the process or activity which students must engage in, as well as the resulting outcome or product. For example, in Step 1, students engage in the process of planning their strategy for completing the paper. The resulting end product is a calendar of events.

Diagram 1 - Research Paper Writing Process Model

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
Process	Plan your strategy	Generate "slugs"	Arrange "slugs"	Locate info. in library	Read & highlight info. found in article	Read & take detailed notes	Structure term paper	Write revised paper	Revise paper	Complete term paper
Product	Calendar of events	"Slug sheet"	"Preliminary" outline	Xeroxed article with research slips attached	"Revised" outline	"Elaborated" outline	"Blueprint" of term paper	First draft	Revised version of term paper	Final version

The student begins the research paper writing process in Step 1 by planning a strategy. This consists of two elements: Comprehending the assignment and planning a time-line or schedule which will lead to the paper's completion. The end product of this step is a calendar of events. In Step 2 (Generate "Slugs") students expose themselves to the literature on their research topic for the first time. While reading, students record one or two words which summarize or capture the essence of the material they are reading. Here these word summaries will be referred to as "slugs." By the end of this step, students will have produced a "slug" sheet which lists all of the slugs in no particular order. In Step 3 (Organize "slugs") students use the slugs to produce a first or "preliminary outline." During Step 4 (Locate information in Library) students locate materials in the library, then xerox and label relevant information. In Step 5 (Read and Highlight Information Found in Library) students read the articles, highlighting the most significant information. Given the student's more detailed knowledge of the topic, she/he then modifies the "preliminary" outline to produce a "revised " outline. In Step 6 (Read and Take Detailed Notes) students fill in the "revised" outline with detailed notes, thereby creating an "elaborated" outline. In Step 7 (Structure Term Paper) students plan the overall structure of the term paper. This includes determining which subtitles should be used, where introductory and conclusive paragraphs should be placed in the paper, etc. As a result, the student produces a "blueprint" of the term paper. Taking this "blueprint" of the research paper, and the "Elaborated" outline, the student writes the first draft in Step 8 (Write

Research Paper). The revision process begins in Step 9 (Revise) when the student draft is modified. In Step 10 (Polish the Paper) the student engages in the process of putting the finishing touches on the research paper.

In summary, the Research paper Writing Model is a visual representation of the ten basic steps through which an expert progresses in order to produce a quality term paper. By using this model as a guide, students are able to emulate the behavior of the expert. The professor's task is to train students in this ten-step research writing process so that they can in fact produce quality research papers. Yet, what procedure should the social sciences professor use when instructing students in the skill of research paper writing?

Implementing this Approach to

Research Paper Writing in a Social Science Course

In the following section, a lesson plan which can be used by professors of all disciplines will be outlined. It should be noted that instruction will pass through three phases. During Phase 1 students will be first introduced to the ten step model, then in Phase 2 each step will be described in greater detail. Phase 3, though optional, is highly recommended. During this Phase, additional time is spent supporting the development of the research writing skill. It may not be possible for a professor to devote additional class time due to time limitations and constraints. Yet, for those who are able to, recommendations have been provided. By using this approach to training students, professors will be able to instruct their students in the science of research paper writing

in a relatively short period of time. Phases 1 and 2 need not take longer than 2 and 1/2 hours. Professors will find that the time which they spend training students in the writing process is time well-invested.

Phase 1- Provide Students with an Overview of the Research Paper Writing Model

During the first phase of instruction, the professor introduces students to the Research Paper Writing Model. While referring to an overhead transparency of the model and student handouts, he/she slowly and carefully describes each step as well as the logic underlying the progression of steps in the model. It is helpful to emphasize that actual writing does not begin until Step 8. For quality research papers, the first seven steps are critical.

Phase 2-Describe Steps in Research Paper Writing Model

During this second phase, the professor describes each of the model's steps to students in greater depth and detail. Consequently, the student's role during each step is clarified.

Step 1-Plan Your Strategy

Often students perform poorly on assignments because they do not understand the requirements of the assignment. The research paper is no exception. The purpose of this step is for students to make certain that the assignment is clear. The social science professor can facilitate this process by providing students with a written and detailed assignment sheet which spells out the following : (1) the objective of the assignment, (2) way in which it should be completed, (3) what the term paper should consist of and how it should be structured, and (4) how it will be evaluated. Appendix B displays an example of an assignment sheet which was constructed for a research paper assignment.

Here this will be referred to as a "specification sheet." It is particularly helpful to create an overhead transparency of one's specification sheet and go over each section of it with the students. Students should be encouraged to ask questions when there are areas which require greater clarification.

Once the assignment has been understood, students are ready to determine their research paper topic. Some professors prefer to approve of student paper topics. Others require students to write on topics with which the professor is familiar. After the term paper topic is has been identified, students are ready to plan a calendar or schedule which will guarantee completion of the assignment by the due date. Appendix C contains a suggested schedule for a 15 week course.

There are several reasons why a schedule is beneficial. First, it reduces student anxiety. Students often dread term papers because they procrastinate and attempt at engaging in all or most of the steps during a limited period of time. Second, the schedule will increase the quality of the end product since more time will be available for revisions.

<u>Step 2- Generate Slugs</u>

Once the calendar of events has been constructed, the student is then ready to delve into the research paper topic. One quick and easy way to get a feel for a topic is to do a computer database search of journal articles on the topic. This requires some advanced planning and possible assistance from the librarian. The librarian may be able to help students identify descriptors by consulting an index or thesaurus of descriptors. It is helpful to plan the descriptors which will be attempted before the database search and to record the databases and descriptors actually consulted. When

consulting multiple databases which use different descriptors, it is easy to forget which descriptors were used for each of the databases consulted. Consequently, students often find themselves using the same descriptors which they used previously. By recording the descriptors consulted, the student will not waste valuable time. Students will not duplicate their efforts at a later point in time.

Once articles on the student's topic have been identified, the student prints out the bibliographic information including the article abstracts. The student then reads through the abstracts, making brief notations in the left hand columns. These brief notations capture the essence of the article in few words. These summary phrases will be referred to as "slugs" in this paper. After writing slugs for all article abstracts, the students then create a "slug sheet" which is a paper which contains all of the slugs and in no particular order.

Step 3 - Organize Slugs

Using the "Slug Sheet" the student organizes the slugs into a logical sequence. From this, the student creates a "preliminary" outline. This is a critical step in the process, since at a later point in time this outline will provide structure for students when they are engaged in notetaking. That is, the subheadings of the outline will serve as a filing cabinet of sorts as the students attempt to identify the category under which their detailed notes should be placed.

Step 4 - Locate Information in the Library

Previously, in Step 2, the student printed out a list of references and their abstracts on the term paper topic. During Step 4, the student takes the reference information, (i.e., the author, year of publication, volumes, article title, etc.) found on the computer

readout, then enters this information onto "journal "reference slips. (Please see
Appendix D.) Although this process seems redundant, it is not. The student continues
this process for each bibliographic reference. These forms have been designed to
conform to the APA (American Psychological Association) format (American
Psychological Association, 1985). They will prove to be particularly helpful at two later
points in time: (1) when the student must locate information, and (2) when writing up
the reference list or bibliography. Masters of APA formatted research slips for journal
articles, book articles and books can be found in the Appendix D. The professor
provides each student with one set of forms which students can then duplicate for their
use. Once the journal slips have been completed, the student identifies the library call
number for each journal and records it in the appropriate location on the reference slip.

Students similarly identify books on their term paper topic. After consulting the
library card catalogue, the bibliographic information (i.e., author, year of publication,
title, publisher) and the book's call number are recorded on the "book" reference slips.

The student then determines the floor on which the books and journals can be
found, and enters this information onto the reference slips. The reference forms are
then organized so that items with the same or similar call numbers are clipped together.
Books and journals are then pulled from the stacks. Journal articles are xeroxed and
books are checked out. Reference slips are then stapled to each xeroxed article. By the
end of this step, the student has in his/her possession books and xeroxed articles with
reference slips attached. At home books are carefully combed for relevant information.
Important information found in books is xeroxed and reference slips are attached.

<u>Step 5 -   Read and Highlight information found in the article.</u>

In this step, the student carefully reads the xeroxed articles and chapters, highlighting the most relevant information. This step is particularly important for two reasons: (1) it forces the student to identify the most significant material in each article, and (2) as the student becomes more acquainted with the topic he/she will identify areas in which the preliminary outline needs to be revised. Once all material has been read and highlighted, the student re-works the preliminary outline, producing the "revised outline."

Step 6 - Read and Take Detailed Notes

During this step, the student reads the information for a second time. After reading the highlighted portions, detailed notes are taken and placed into the subheadings of the "revised outline." The notes are taken on the computer and entered into the appropriate subheadings of the revised outline. An alternative is to produce a hard copy of the outline (with a single subheading at the top of each page) and record the notes by hand under the subheadings of the outline. This resulting outline, which contains detailed notes, is referred to as the "elaborated outline."

Step 7 - Structure Research Paper

In this step, the student takes time to organize and structure the term paper prior to writing it. There are certain conventions which need to be followed when structuring the term paper. Like the essay, the term paper should contain an introduction and conclusion. The "body" of the research paper consists of all the information which was detailed and contained in the "elaborated outline." Furthermore, the subheadings of the elaborated outline constitute the subheadings in the body of the term paper. If there is

sufficient information under a subheading, a miniature essay, consisting of an introduction, body and conclusion paragraphs, will follow the subheading. Appendix F contains an example of a term paper "blueprint" which was constructed for the "elaborated outline" found in Appendix E.

It is helpful for students to map out the "blueprint" for their particular paper before writing. This makes it clear which paragraphs need to be written, where they should go and where subtitles should be placed in the written text.

Step 8 - Write Term Paper

In this step, students write the first draft of the paper. This consists of the title page, table of contents, report and bibliography. The student writes the report section of the paper while following the "blueprint" of the term paper's overall structure and organization. When writing the "body" of the research paper report, students will rely on the detailed notes contained in the elaborated outline. The process of writing the report section of the term paper is not as overwhelming if small portions are written each day.

After writing up the report section of the term paper, the student will need to prepare the title page and bibliography. A table of contents is helpful when the paper is lengthy. The creation of the bibliography is greatly facilitated by the reference slips. The student simply alphabetizes the reference slips, then enter the bibliographic information into the computer. As long as the student enters in the information as it appears on the forms, then there will be total conformance to the APA. The process is relatively quick and simple. By the end of Step 8, the student has written the first draft of the entire research paper.

Step 9 - Revise Paper

Using the first draft which was created in the previous step, the student will check the paper for spelling and grammatical errors manually and by computer. The student evaluates the paper for its logic and clarity. It is helpful to have another individual read the paper for clarity as well. Students need to be reminded that a quality term paper cannot be produced unless it undergoes several revisions.

Step 10 - Complete Term Paper

The student reviews the instructor's specification sheet and any notes which were taken on the assignment. Particular attention should be paid to the criteria which will be used to grade the research papers. Students should also take care to print out the final version on clean crisp paper using dark ink. Handwritten graphs and diagrams should be replaced with computer graphics. The student prints out what appears to be the final version of the paper. The final version should be checked for errors and corrections should be made until the final product meets the assignment criteria. Students need to be reminded that the research paper is a reflection of who they are. Students generally react quite positively to that line of argument.

In the previous section, the second phase of instruction was described and discussed in detail. During this phase, the function of the professor is to take each of the steps outlined in the Research Paper Writing Model and provide the student with greater information regarding his/her role during each step in the process. The basics of this approach to training students in research paper writing have been described thus

15

far in this paper. This treatment alone, without additional instruction has produced significant results. Yet, the professor may wish to expend additional time and go beyond the rudiments.

Phase 3 - Beyond the Rudiments

Should the professor be inclined to dedicate additional class time to instructing students in research paper writing, there are several activities which have proven to be beneficial. Four of these will be described below.

(1) Products Due on Specified Dates

The professor may require the class to strictly follow the 15-week schedule of events and turn in the "products" associated with each step on specified dates. Thus, the "Slug Sheet" on research paper topics would be due during the second week, while the "Preliminary" outline' would be turned in during the third week, etc. This approach guarantees that students are making progress on their papers over the course of the semester.

(2) Library Database Orientation

One activity which has been particularly helpful has been to request that one of the librarian's conduct a workshop in which students are instructed on how to use the computer databases and general resources in the library. Generally, the reference librarian at the campus library is available for such class sessions.

(3) Peer Readings of Drafts

The professor can also require that students bring four xerox copies of their research drafts several weeks before the final research papers are due. When students arrive to class with their drafts, the professor then organizes students into teams. Each

team member receives a xerox copy of a student's draft, and evaluates it on the basis of the criteria which were established on the professor's assignment specification sheet. There must be group consensus before the group can make written recommendations to the author of the draft. Drafts are then returned to the student authors so that they make the necessary changes.

(4) Practice Mini-research paper

Another way to provide additional support is to engage students in a mini-research paper. Student pairs write a very short paper on either a topic of their choice or one which the professor has selected. Students are required to find a limited number of articles on the topic (e.g., 3 to 5) then produce a mini-term paper. What is important is that students familiarize themselves with the steps in the model on a small scale prior to engaging in a large project.

These are but a few of the ways in which professors can further support the students's acquisition of the research paper writing skill. While students learned the rudiments of this approach during Phases 1 and 2 of instruction, the function of Phase 3 was to provide additional opportunities for students to develop the skill of writing the research paper. In this section, a few of these activities have been shared.

Conclusion

College students tend to experience difficulty producing research papers which meet their professor's expectations. Professors similarly experience frustration and disappointment as they read term papers in their content areas. One approach to this problem has been used successfully at California State University, Dominguez Hills. This approach has significantly ameliorated the situation and has resulted in the

production of quality research papers. In this paper, this approach to the instruction of research paper writing has been outlined and described in such a way that other professors of social science can immediately implement it in their courses. To further assist professors, masters of student handouts and overhead transparencies have been provided in the appendices. It is hoped that other professors will be able to make use of this approach and similarly increase the quality of their students' papers.

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Appendix A
Research Paper Writing Model

10 Step Research Paper Writing Model

	Step 1	Step 2	Step 3	Step 4	Step 5.	Step 6	Step 7	Step 8	Step 9	Step 10
Process	Plan your strategy	Generate "slugs"	Arrange "slugs"	Locate info. in library	Read & highlight info. found in article	Read & take detailed notes	Structure term paper	Write revised paper	Revise paper	Complete term paper
Product	Calendar of events	"Slug sheet"	"Preliminary" outline	Xeroxed article with research slips attached	"Revised" outline	"Elaborated" outline	"Blueprint" of term paper	First draft	Revised version of term paper	Final version

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21

20

Appendix B
Sample Research Paper Specification Sheet

Description of the Assignment

Students will engage in library research on a topic of professional interest to them, and produce a research paper on a topic which directly relates to the education of Hispanic Students.

Outcome

1. Report Format: The final research report will contain subheadings for all major sections. Approximate length of the paper is 10 pages excluding bibliography.

2. Database and Team Grade Information: On a separate page, provide the following information:

    A. Databases: List the names of the databases which you consulted (e.g., ERIC, Psychlit) and the descriptors which were consulted for each database.

    B. Team Grade: Specify whether you wish for all members of the team to receive the same grade or be graded on the basis of individual contributions to the finished product. If you decide on the last option, then describe the function of each member and the time which each student invested in the project.

3. Project Evaluation: Teams should discuss the following questions. In brief, yet informative paragraphs, individual team members should write up their responses to these questions.

    A. Why did you decide upon this particular topic ?
    B. Did your succeed at meeting your personal goal ?
    C. Do you believe that this was a worthwhile assignment for you personally ?

Grading Criteria

For each of the following criteria which have not been met, the grade will be lowered by 1/2 grade (e.g., an A to an A-). On the title page of each returned paper, the instructor will indicate the final research paper grade and list below it the criteria which were not met. In the body of the paper, the instructor will clearly identify the unmet criteria and mark each with a circled asterisk.

22

The following criteria will be used when grading the research papers:

1. Form

Typed (no free-hand diagrams or handwritten text); neatness; spelling (no more than 3 errors in the entire paper); grammar; punctuation; conformity to APA bibliographic format; sufficient number of references within the body of the text; proper citation of sources within body of the paper according to APA .

2. Content

Degree to which the content is objective, substantive and informative; organization of content; appropriate use of subtitles; clarity of expression; logical progression of thoughts; success at maintaining reader's interest; display of data; depth of thought; sufficient detail; conformance to project specifications; overall quality.

3. Research process

Extent to which the topic was thoroughly investigated (i.e., number of databases and descriptors consulted).

Appendix C
Schedule of Events for a 15-Week Course

Schedule of Events for a 15 week course

Week	Process	Product
1	Step 1 Plan your strategy	Calendar of events
2	Step 2 Generate "slugs"	"Slug sheet"
3	Step 3 Organize "slugs"	"Preliminary" outline
4	Step 4 Locate information	
5	Step 4 Locate information	
6	Step 4 Locate information	Xeroxed articles with research slips attached
7	Step 5 Read & highlight information found in article	Revised outline
8	Step 6 Read & take detailed notes	
9	Step 6 Read & take detailed notes	"Elaborated" outline
10	Step 7 Structure term paper	"Blueprint" of term paper
11	Step 8 Write paper	
12	Step 8 Write paper	First draft
13	Step 9 Revise	Revised version of term paper
14	Step 10 Complete term paper	Final version
15	Research paper due	

25

26

Appendix D
Reference Slips for Journal articles, Book articles, books

Appendix E
Example of "Elaborated" Outline

I. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

  A. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

    1. ☐

    2. ☐

    3. ☐

  B. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

    1. ☐

    2. ☐

    3. ☐

II. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

  A. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

    1. ☐

    2. ☐

    3. ☐

  B. ▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨▨

    1. ☐

    2. ☐

    3. ☐

Appendix F
Example of Research Paper "Blueprint"

Introduction
to Research
Paper

I. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to I

A. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to A

1

2

3

Conclusion to A

B. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to B

1

2

3

Conclusion to B

Conclusion to I

II. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to II

A. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to A

1

2

3

Conclusion to A

B. [≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡≡]

Introduction to B

1

2

3

Conclusion to B

Conclusion to II

Conclusion
to Research
Paper

31

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