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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
|  | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Weak** |
| **1. Research Motivation and Introduction:** The hypothesis, variables, and logic and motivation behind the research. | The paper clearly communicates its purpose from the beginning, justifying the importance of the specific hypothesis and linking it to a meaningful real-world context for the author’s claims, which are developed throughout the paper.  The rationale, research question, and method of analysis are stated clearly in the Introduction, and developed and explained throughout the paper.  The Introduction articulates a clear, reasonable, succinct hypothesis that makes a falsifiable prediction.  The independent and dependent variable(s) are clearly identified, and have been operationalized so that they are clear, unambiguous, observable, measurable, and valid to link with the purpose of the study. | The purpose of the paper is clearly communicated, but misses some opportunities for nuance or subtlety,  or else it sets out to explore an ambitious idea whose complexity leads to minor errors in articulation.  The introduction suggests some context or stakes for the argument but does not offer strong rationale, or a convincing motive is gestured at but remains implicit.  The hypothesis is stated, connected to the research issue, and supported by the literature. Constructs have been identified and variables have been operationally defined. | Either the major claim is clear and arguable but lacks complexity, or else sets out to explore an intriguing idea that has not developed into a specific claim.  The introduction either unsuccessfully motivates an unexpected claim or weakly and artificially motivates a claim that does not constitute a significant revision of the status quo.  A hypothesis and variables are articulated, but may be slightly confusing or illogical. | The major claim is logical and would require some evidence to support, but the stakes are not as high as they should be. The paper’s major claims are somewhat unclear, unspecific or uninteresting.  Elements of the hypothesis are poorly formed, ambiguous, or not logically connected to the description of the problem, purpose, or research methods. | The major claim of the paper is weak—vague, simple, or obvious.  The introduction usually has no motive.  Research questions,  definitions, assumptions and limitations were omitted or inappropriate given the context, purpose, or methods of the study. |
|  | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Weak** |
| **2. Research Design and Methods:** Site and plot selection, sampling procedures, instruments and analysis. | The purpose, questions, and design of the study are mutually supportive and coherent. The rationale for the study design, such as the kind and number of sites and plots selected, the methods used, and the variables measured is clearly articulated and forms a coherent logic that will serve to address the hypothesis.  The methods selected were appropriate to measure the variables of interest, and were described in sufficient detail, using both words and images, that the reader could easily understand what was being measured and why.  Procedures were thorough,  manageable, coherent, presented chronologically, and powerful  for generating valid and reliable data.  It would be possible for a new researcher to replicate the study given the level of detail in the Methods.  The sampling process was reasonable to recruit a representative sample of the population. Attention was given to controlling for extraneous factors and confounding variables, eliminating alternative explanations, and sampling error where possible.  A clear explanation of the data analysis strategy used and a justification for analyzing the data in this way to address the hypothesis is provided. | There is a logical and thoughtful plan for manageable execution of the project, and the rationale generally supports addressing the hypothesis, perhaps with a few small gaps or omissions.  The research design has been identified and described in sufficiently detailed terms.  The context, population, and sampling strategy was adequately identified and described.  Instruments and observation protocols were identified by name and described.  Procedures for implementing the study were identified and described in a logical, chronological fashion.  A data analysis strategy is described. | The plan for study execution relates to the hypothesis, but opportunities to mutually reinforce between the two are missed.  Processes for carrying out the project appear reasonable, but there is some uncertainty as to how and why they were conducted.  A data analysis strategy is mentioned. | The research design is confusing or incomplete in relation to the hypothesis and sampling strategy.  The description of the context, sampling strategy, instruments, procedures, or data analysis was confusing, incomplete, or lacked relevance to the purpose. No data analysis strategy is mentioned. | The research design is  inappropriate or has not been identified or described using standard terminology. |
|  | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Weak** |
| **3. Results:** The presentation of original research findings in text and images. | The findings from the study are presented visually in sufficient but not excessive detail, using thoughtful and well-designed graphics that are easy to read and interpret, supplemented by descriptive figure headings.  The graphics presented serve to illuminate important patterns in the data. Illustrations are well-integrated with the text, with the most important findings presented in both words and images for the reader, and support the claims made by the author.  Data are presented in analyzed or aggregated, rather than raw form, to facilitate interpretation.  The patterns evident in the data are clearly articulated in the text (e.g., “tree height was two times greater in Dalby forest than Stadsparken”), but their interpretation (e.g., “This was possibly due to competition between species in Dalby”), speculation and opinion are reserved for the Discussion section. | The findings from the study are presented both visually and verbally, using well-designed graphics that are linked with the text.  Data are presented in aggregate form.  The patterns evident in the data are clearly articulated, but miss some opportunities for exploration or explanation. | The findings from the study are presented both visually and verbally, but stronger linkages are needed between the two.  Some of the data presented may be unclear or not fully explained.  There may be opinion or interpretation entering into the Results section. | The findings from the study are presented in incoherent or confusing text and graphics.  Data are not sufficiently analyzed, instead presented in raw form.  There is a mix between the presentation of data and its interpretation. | The findings of the study are not clearly presented visually or verbally. |
|  | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Weak** |
| **4. Discussion & Conclusion:** Synthesis and interpreta-tion of results, addressing limitations and implications. | The research findings are insightfully and clearly summarized, with the meaning of this study for our understanding of the phenomenon investigated clearly stated in a synthesis of the whole paper.  Results are placed in a broader context, including references to relevant findings from the literature and an acknowledgement of important limitations or biases of the present study, with an exploration of how these may have impacted the present study and how these could be addressed in the future.  There is specific reference back to the hypothesis and a statement of whether the evidence from the field supported or did not support the hypothesis, and a clear articulation of why this might be the case (the demonstration of which may require further study). | The research findings are clearly summarized and synthesized, and linked to a broader context.  Important limitations are acknowledged and addressed.  The hypothesis is explicitly addressed in the context of the research findings. | The research findings are summarized and a broader context is indicated, though not fully developed.  Some limitations have been acknowledged.  The hypothesis is mentioned, but the study findings are not clearly summarized to conclude how the hypothesis was supported or not. | The research findings are repeated without additional synthesis or insight in connection to other research.  Limitations are only weakly addressed.  The relationship between the study findings and the hypothesis is unclear. | Research findings are not clearly synthesized and placed in a broader context.  Limitations and next steps are not addressed, and the research findings are not placed in the context of the hypothesis and its implications. |
|  | **Excellent** | **Very Good** | **Good** | **Adequate** | **Weak** |
| **5. Writing Structure and Style:** The logic, flow, and organization of the paper, and the use of language, including clarity, formatting. | Section headings are used effectively to guide the reader through the development of the argument. Paragraphs are used effectively to articulate and develop one core idea, which is clearly stated in a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph. Sentences are complete, logical, and easy to read. Transitions are smooth.  The writing is clear and concise, yet sophisticated, demonstrating sentence variety and appropriate vocabulary without unnecessary jargon. Illustrations are carefully designed and presented in an aesthetically pleasing way. The voice of the author is appropriate for the context of the paper. The formatting of the paper on the page helps guide the reader and contains no errors. In-text citations and the reference list are appropriately formatted using APA style. The English expression is natural and grammatical. The paper is a pleasure to read. | Section headings and paragraphs are used to organize ideas in a way that helps guide the reader.  The writing is mostly clear, but may contain a few confusing sentences or mechanical problems, including minor English errors. Illustrations are clearly designed. Formatting is used effectively, although a few typos or formatting errors may be present. In-text citations and the reference list are consistently formatted. It is mostly engaging. | Transitional language may be present but is unsuccessful or inconsistent. Section headings and paragraphs may organize some ideas, but not consistently.  The writing is straightforward, mostly clear, and often engaging, but it contains occasional mechanical problems, confusing sentences, or moments of vagueness. Illustrations are adequately designed. References may be inconsistently formatted, and overall formatting does not consistently aid the reader. | Paragraphs are not used effectively to organize ideas, and are either far too short (1-2 sentences), too long (more than half a page), or contain too many apparently unrelated ideas.  Though the writing generally makes sense and there may be moments where the word choice is appropriate and elegant, it is weak enough in places to obscure the author’s ideas, often as a result of vagueness, verbosity, awkwardness, or a recurrent mechanical problem. Illustrations are difficult to read or interpret. Formatting of the paper or the references is problematic. | Headings and paragraph structure do not assist the reader in following the logic of the paper.  The writing is generally confusing, awkward, or too verbose, and probably exhibits numerous mechanical problems. Its word choice or use may be inappropriate. Illustrations are poorly designed. The paper formatting is sloppy or unhelpful, and references are not properly formatted. |
| **Originality and creativity** | There are many original, innovative, or creative aspects. | There are some original, innovative, or creative aspects. | There are a few original, innovative, or creative aspects. | It is not clear if there are original, innovative, or creative aspects. | There are no original, innovative, or creative aspects. |

**Not pass:** A paper will not pass if it does not address the assignment, falls substantially short of the minimum word requirement, is excessively sloppy, or plagiarizes or otherwise lacks academic integrity.

Rubric developed based on resources from the University of Alabama Rubric Resources:

<http://www.assessment.ua.edu/Rubrics/RUBRIC%20WEBSITE/UA%20RUBRICS/NON%20UA%20Rubrics/Research%20Methods/Assessment_Rubric_for_Research_Proposal.pdf>

and the Brandeis University Writing Program, using rubrics from Prof. Jim Morris, Profs. Kryder and Cunningham, Prof. Lamb, Prof. Watson, and Prof. Brettler: <http://www.brandeis.edu/writingprogram/uws/instructors/davisrubrics.html>.