



ROER4D Final Research Report Submission Guidelines

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Contents

[Introduction](#)

[Final Research Report Structure](#)

[Title](#)

[Abstract](#)

[Keywords](#)

[Introduction](#)

[Literature Review and Theoretical Framework](#)

[Methodology](#)

[Findings](#)

[Discussion](#)

[Conclusion](#)

[References](#)

[Appendices](#)

[Document Formatting Guidelines](#)

[Typesetting](#)

[Headings](#)

[Figures and Tables](#)

[Abbreviations](#)

[References](#)



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[Footnotes](#)
[Acknowledgements](#)

Introduction

This Guidelines document is intended as an authors' guide for the preparation and submission of ROER4D final research reports. The aim is to provide ROER4D researchers with a clear sense of the level of detail required in the final writing up of the sub-project (SP) research process, and to introduce elements of coherence in order to facilitate meta-level analysis and public dissemination.

Final research reports will be submitted at the end of each SP timeframe (in line with agreed-upon project schedules), and will form the basis of SP chapters in the final ROER4D consolidated report, to be published as a dynamic ebook with remixable components.

The ROER4D Network Hub acknowledges that researchers may wish to publish components of their final research report as discrete research articles, or recycle components of the work into more accessible output forms such as policy briefs and blog posts. The Curation and Dissemination team, along with the ROER4D Principal Investigators, will work with SP researchers in order to distill final research reports into book chapters of 10 000 – 15 000 words each in a manner that serves the ROER4D publishing agenda and suits individual researcher publication aspirations.

Note that in terms of the ROER4D 2015 Addendum to the Subcontract Agreement (Section 4.1):
Parties agree to share data and co-operate with each other and to publish jointly when appropriate. Authorship will be based on commonly accepted standards. Where possible authors will publish in Open Access journals and/or make reports available under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International default licence.

All outputs published by the ROER4D Network Hub will undergo a copy-edit by the Curation and Dissemination Manager and be reviewed by either Adoption Studies or Impact Studies Principal Investigators. It is also envisioned that the publication process on final book chapters will include a peer review component, to be scoped in collaboration with SP Lead Researchers.

In constructing final research reports and chapters it is important to pay attention to any issues which may impede public dissemination (such as identification of research subjects or utilisation of third-party copyright material). We also urge sub-projects to pay close attention to their intended audience constituencies and to bear these audiences in mind as far as possible when producing final reports.

Please consult the [ROER4D Editorial Stylesheet](#) for guidelines on editorial convention and stylistic issues.

Final Research Report Structure

Your final research report should follow the scholarly conventions typically employed when preparing a paper for publication. You should present your content in the categories outlined below, paying close attention to the tips and guiding questions provided on each of the sections.

Title

- Title, abstract and keywords play a pivotal role in the dissemination and findability of your work online. Most electronic search engines, databases and journal websites use the words in these elements as crucial metadata in rendering results on search-engine queries.
- It is important that your report title acts as a succinct expression of what makes your research novel and important to your audience. Bear your intended audience in mind when formulating a title.
- Your Final Research Report will be published online. It is not necessary for the report title to exactly replicate your project title. Attention should be paid to phrasing that will entice your intended audience and emphasise the unique nature of the work presented.
- Try to bear in mind discoverability factors (i.e. identification by search engines and indexing mechanisms) when people are searching for your work online; i.e. make your title as accurate and specific as possible so that it is differentiable when people are searching for your work.
- It is useful to locate the geographical focus of your work in the report title in order to differentiate your work from large volumes of similar work available online, and to identify geographical location for any research focused on the region in question.

Tips for good titles

- Write your research question as a statement and compare this to your title – there should be a strong relationship between the two.
- Print and cut out each word of the title and try arranging them or rearranging them with the most essential concept(s), theoretical perspectives or methodological approach and see what you can leave out. (Note how the meaning can be changed quite subtly as you give certain words prominence over others.)
- Check your title in relation to the following “Big 5” issues:
 1. **Educational benefits:** Specify the benefit for learning, pedagogy, curriculum, policy change/development, etc.
 2. **Technological phenomenon:** Specify the technology - in this case OER or MOOCs
 3. **Conceptual/theoretical frameworks:** Name of theory or conceptual framework (if applicable)
 4. **Methodology/strategy:** Type of research, period of study (if applicable)
 5. **Context:** Participants, location, level of study

Examples (with colours to illustrate the points above):

- Exploring the cultural-historical factors that influence OER adoption and use in Mongolia's higher education sector
- Collaborative co-creation of OER by teacher educators and teachers in south western Colombia: An action research study
- Social and cultural acceptability of OER by academics in universities in South Africa: An Activity Theory perspective

Abstract

The abstract is a succinct account of the purpose, theoretical framework, methods, findings, significance and recommendations of the study. It should be no longer than 150–300 words long. The abstract should function as a stand-alone entity and provide a succinct, understandable overview of the research. It is often the only section of the report people read. Should you choose to publish any of the data associated with your study, it is recommended that you include a line stating that underlying data is published and to state any access conditions associated with the data. In cases where the research community or main intended audience associated with the project are not first-language English speakers, a translated abstract in the language of the principal constituency should be incorporated.

Guiding questions

- Does the abstract adequately summarise the essence of the research; namely, the purpose, methods, findings, potential impact, and recommendations?
- Does the detail in the abstract locate the study within its particular geographical context?
- Does the abstract avoid unnecessary, extraneous information such as citations of literature reviewed, unfamiliar abbreviations, tables, figures, etc.?
- Can the abstract be understood without reading the entire report?

Tips for good abstracts

- Write the abstract after you have written your conclusion so that you capture the key elements of the study:
 - the trigger problem that prompted the research
 - the main argument
 - aim, hypothesis, main research question, or objective (choose one of these - the rest can appear later in the report)
 - the overall approach or method, the type of data (qualitative or quantitative) you collected, how you analysed the data, any special techniques you used
 - key findings (one or two)
 - any key discussion points, new questions raised or directions for future research.

Keywords

- List three to five keywords or phrases which you feel capture the main themes of your work.
- An accurate list of keywords will promote correct indexing and increase the visibility of your research; which in turn will increase the chances of it being cited.
- Certain disciplines have a common vocabulary or indexing standard (e.g. ERIC Thesaurus, GeoRef, PsycInfo, ChemWeb). If you are using any technical terms, you should check that your phrasing matches disciplinary convention.
- Include common abbreviations rather than writing out full words if these are more likely to be searched (i.e. OER rather than Open Educational Resources; MOOC rather than Massive Open Online Course).
- In cases where the research community or main intended audience associated with the project are not first-language English speakers, include translated keywords along with the translated abstract.

Introduction

- The introduction should state the research problem; what gaps in the research literature the study sets out to fill; why it is important; and outline the rationale, purpose, design and context of the study. It is important that the contextual component of your introduction draws attention to the geographical location of the study, any contextual dynamics that may be associated with the geographical component, and any considerations relating to gender.
- The introduction should make a clear and cogent argument demonstrating the importance and value of the study. This can be done by indicating a specific gap in previous research or by raising a question, hypothesis, or the need to better understand an issue or phenomenon.

Guiding questions

Does the introduction:

- Introduce the problem and provide an overview of what the study enquired into, the background/history and/or context of the study, and the purpose and objectives of the study?
- Demonstrate that the area of research is important, critical, interesting, problematic, relevant, or otherwise worthy of investigation?
- Describe the overall structure of the report?

Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

- The literature review and theoretical framework locate the study within a broader academic context. It provides an overview of the empirical and theoretical work that the study is related to and which the study contributes to and/or builds upon.
- The first section of the research report reviews prior studies that are similar or related to the research being reported upon. (This review should include those that are referred to in the Findings and Discussion section where you compare your research findings to prior studies).

- This second section of the research report provides the theoretical perspective adopted in framing the research questions and the research design; including the definition of key concepts employed in the study, assumptions made and/or the hypotheses investigated.

Guiding questions

- What studies are similar or related to the research (i.e. studies that investigate similar and/or related research questions)? For each of these related studies, what were the key research questions; what key concepts were deployed and how were these defined; how were the research questions addressed; and what were the main findings? [Note: The literature review should not simply provide a long string of citations without any explanations about their key points, significance, and/or differences.]
- How similar and/or different is the research from these related studies? How do these studies relate to the research and vice-versa?
- Are there any particular geographical dynamics or trends that surface in the literature review or inform the theoretical framework?
- What key concepts and the relationships between these concepts, derived from the review of related studies, comprises the research framework?
- Has the theoretical perspective you adopt been used by other OER/MOOC researchers?
- Overall, does the literature review and theoretical framework help the reader to understand the main problem that the study tackles, or the need for the study within a particular context?

Methodology

- This section of the report should reflect the research design. Your audience will judge the validity and reliability or trustworthiness of the work by this section.
- Describe in sufficient detail the research approach (quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods); rationale for selection of site and participants; data collection methods (e.g. survey, interview, observation); and instruments (e.g. questionnaire, interview schedule, observation checklist). You should also identify the data analysis method (e.g. content analysis, thematic analysis), data analysis tools (Excel, SPSS, Nvivo), and the analytical framework used to analyse the data.
- Remember to link to each instrument to an appendix with the letter (e.g. Appendix A) at the relevant point in the text.
- Make explicit what your ethical approval process entailed, and what measures were taken to ensure adherence to these provisions.
- Describe any threats to validity (e.g. bias, reactivity) or risks associated with the study, and how these were addressed.

Guiding questions

- Is the type of study conducted (e.g. quantitative, qualitative or mixed method) and rationale for adoption of the particular approach explained?
- Does the report explain in detail how the data was collected, summarised, and analysed (including descriptions of the analytical framework/coding protocols and software utilised)? Are each of the instruments provided in an accompanying appendix?

- Does the description of how the study was conducted allow readers to evaluate the appropriateness of the research design?
- Is there an account of the measures taken to address issues of trustworthiness (validity and reliability) of the study and its findings/results?
- Are any bias factors or risks associated with the study made explicit?
- Are the modes of inquiry well executed and appropriate to the particular problem?
- Are there any means by which the methodology or aspects of the research process can be visualised through the use of graphs, diagrams, models or infographics?

Findings

In this section, the report should systematically and clearly present and interpret the findings.

Guiding questions

- Are the findings/results clearly substantiated and logically based on the and data/evidence collected for each of the subsidiary research questions? How is this demonstrated?
- Are the findings/results reasonable and expected, or are they unexpected?
- Are there any means by which findings can be visualised through the use of graphs, diagrams, models or infographics?

Discussion

This section provides a critical discussion or analysis of the research findings. It shows how the findings address key themes within the research questions. It may include a revised conceptual model to that originally proposed in the conceptual/theoretical framework proposed before the study was undertaken. This section makes clear the scientific/scholarly and/or practical significance of the study.

Guiding questions

- Are the key research findings discussed/analysed in terms of the themes/ key concepts within the research questions?
- Does the discussion/analysis demonstrate how the study engaged with previous studies in relation to theoretical perspectives or empirical findings?
- Is there a thoughtful discussion of the implications of the study for addressing critical issues within the field and topic under investigation?
- If there are unexpected results, has an attempt been made to adequately account for this?
- If a hypothesis was proposed, does the report state whether it was verified or falsified? Alternatively, if no hypothesis was proposed, does the report state whether the research question was answered?
- Are the limitations of the study noted?

Conclusion

The conclusion is intended to help the reader understand why the research should matter to them.

This section is not merely a summary of the findings or a re-statement of the research problem, but a synthesis of key points, as well as implications and recommendations. It presents a conclusive statement on the issues raised in the report. Just as the introduction gives a first impression to the reader, the conclusion offers a chance to leave a lasting impression.

Guiding questions

Does the conclusion:

- Link back to the abstract and introduction and answer the preliminary questions raised?
- Provide a summary of key findings and convey the larger implications of the study?
- Elaborate upon the implications of the findings for research, practice or policy, as appropriate?
- Succinctly demonstrate the value of the research by placing the study within the context of past research about the topic investigated?
- Propose areas for further research, including possible new or expanded ways of thinking about the research problem? This does not refer to introducing new information (which should be avoided), but to offering new insight and creative approaches for framing/contextualising the research problem based on the results of the study.

References

- ROER4D utilises the APA referencing style. See <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/15/> and http://library.flcc.edu/APA_FLCC.pdf for guidelines. You may also wish to consult the [ROER4D Editorial Stylesheet](#) for examples on how to deal with commonplace formatting issues.
- Note that format for data citation is: Name of producer. Survey name and date [dataset]. Version number. Place of production: Producer [producer], date of production. Place of distribution: Distributor [distributor]. URL or DOI. For example: Research on Open Educational Resources for Development (ROER4D). Academics' views on sharing OER in South Africa 2015. Version 1. Cape Town. ROER4D, 2015. Cape Town. DataFirst, 2015. [URL]
- Only references cited in the report text are to be included in the list of references.
- In the case of in-text citations, arrange works by multiple authors by most recent year of publication, placing in-press citations last (e.g. Malik, 2014; Karunanayaka & Naidu, 2012; Trotter & Cox, in press).

Appendices

Appendices contain material that is too detailed to include in the main report, including questionnaires, interview schedules. Each appendix must be given a letter and title and each appendix must be referred to by the letter at the relevant point in the text in sequence of appearance in the text (i.e. Appendix A then Appendix B), irrespective of when they were actually used in the field work).

Document Formatting Guidelines

Typesetting

All submissions should be in 11-point Times New Roman font, with line-spacing 1.15, left-aligned, in MS Word or compatible open source application, with as little formatting as possible. The main body of the text, along with tables, figures, appendices and references should be provided in one document.

Headings

Try to limit sections and sub-sections to three heading levels, if possible, ensuring that heading levels are clearly indicated in the text.

Figures and Tables

Figures and tables should be numbered with corresponding legends and placed in the main text of the report. All figures and tables should contain a cross-reference in the text before they are presented in the document. Refer to your figures and tables as “Figure 1.”, “Table 1.”, etc. and place headings before the actual figure/table.

Data visualisations should be accompanied by either a spreadsheet or table representing the data on which the visualisation is based. This is required should visualisations need to be recreated in the final publishing platform by the Curation and Dissemination team.

Abbreviations

Try to keep abbreviations to a minimum. Define abbreviations upon first appearance in the text and do not use non-standard abbreviations unless they appear at least three times in the text.

References

Utilise APA referencing conventions. See <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/560/15/> and http://library.flcc.edu/APA_FLCC.pdf as well as the [ROER4D Editorial Stylesheet](#) for guidelines. Do not list unavailable and unpublished work (including manuscripts that have been submitted but not yet accepted) or personal communications in the Reference list – listed these instead as footnotes.

Footnotes

Avoid over-use of footnotes. These should only contain clarification detail that is not crucial to the main text narrative, unpublished work, personal communications, and links to static website pages. Online resources available as pdf or other document downloads should be cited in the text and listed in the References.

Acknowledgements

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Queries?

Please contact ROER4D Curation & Dissemination Manager michelle.willmers@uct.ac.za if you have any queries.