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Lesson Plan: Peer Review Research Questions

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Lesson Plan: Peer Review Research Questions

Research Question Peer Review Overview (15 min.)

Let's do a quick review of the criteria for effective research questions.

1. Requires research to answer (Is my question answered too easily?)
2. Prompts the development of an argument supported by evidence (Is the answer to my research question self-evident?)
3. Avoids speculation, subjective responses, or bias (Can my research question be answered with factual evidence?)
4. Is focused on a specific topic or issue (Are there way too many sources for my topic?)

Does anyone have any questions about these criteria?

It is so important to get the feedback of others when you are developing things like a research question. Getting multiple perspectives about a single topic can help you think of things you never would have on your own. So today, you are going to be a peer reviewer for two of your classmates. You will be reading their draft research questions and providing constructive feedback for them to consider.

Let's go over the protocol for our peer review.

1. Read the question
2. Check it against the effective research question criteria
3. Give constructive feedback
4. Read the question again, checking to make sure your feedback is constructive
5. Hand in your feedback

Ok, so I'm sure you've noticed that I've referred to constructive feedback. Let's talk about what I mean by that.

1. **Consider the author's goals** – you all know what you are all trying to accomplish here – we're writing a 4-6 page recommendation – you are not writing a dissertation, keep that in mind when giving feedback
2. **Realistic feedback** – are you suggesting something that the author can feasibly accomplish in the timeline we have? Is your feedback appropriate for this project?
3. **Specific feedback** – very little is gained from vague feedback, be explicit about what you find problematic about their research question
4. **Descriptive feedback** – similar to being specific, be clear about your suggestions for improvement – if you think a research question is too broad, make suggestions for how the author can narrow their scope
5. **Direct feedback** – don't sugarcoat your feedback – we are doing this in a short amount of time, so be clear and precise about what you are suggesting – avoid 'this is good, but...'
6. **Be nice** – Nobody likes a jerk or a know-it-all. Make thoughtful, well-considered comments that aim at improvement.

Let's quickly talk about what to avoid when providing your peers feedback...

1. Don't direct your feedback to the author—you are talking about the work, not the author
2. Don't give frivolous feedback – Nobody learns anything from “I like this”
3. Don't think about your own research needs or process when giving feedback – keep the focus on the author and their work, not your experiences
4. Don't be mean – this is an exercise for improvement, don't be a jerk

Ok, so know that we've set the ground rules, let's start peer reviewing.

Peer Review Exercise (20 min.)

I am passing out notecards and half-sheets. Everyone should take one half-sheet and two notecards. The half-sheets are just for your reference. They are a reminder of the criteria for effective research questions and the checklist for constructive feedback. Once you have your half-sheet and notecards, take a look at the instructions on the screen.

Pass the notecards in to me once you are finished. I will redistribute them. Make sure you get two different draft research questions and ensure that neither of them are yours. Once you have your peers' questions, start reviewing. Look at the criteria. What suggestions can you offer your peer? Give your peer feedback by writing directly on the notecard. Please make sure you include your name or initials in case your peer has questions or wants to follow-up with you about your suggestions.

Be sure to take your time and provide thoughtful feedback. Hand in the notecards once you have finished.

Your draft research question

1. Take a few minutes to think about your research question
2. Write your draft research question on the front of two note cards
3. On the back of the note cards, write your initials

FRONT

How does the amount of time studying impact Criminal Justice students' test grades?

BACK

RD

Work on Working Research Question (15 min.)

So, now that you have your peer's feedback, go ahead and start on developing your working research question. I'll walk around and check in with you all while you work.

Your assignment has 3 short parts:

1. Writing a working research question
2. The research question self-assessment
3. Write a few sentences reflecting on how you got through the process of writing your research question

Handout: Peer Review Research Questions

Criteria for Effective Research Questions

1. Requires research to answer
2. Prompts the development of an argument supported by evidence
3. Avoids speculation, subjective responses, or bias
4. Is focused on a specific topic or issue

Checklist for Constructive Feedback

- I understand what the author is trying to achieve
- My comments are realistic
- My comments are specific
- My comments are descriptive
- My comments are direct
- My comments are non-judgmental

Assignment: Working Research Question & Self-Assessment

Purpose: Up to this point, your research has revolved around a particular scenario highlighting an important issue in Criminology and Criminal Justice. This assignment will help you focus your research by having you develop a specific research question that your scenario has inspired you to ask. As a researcher, you not only want to answer your research question through evidence that you've gathered, but you want to convey to your audience why the question is worth answering in the first place. While research questions are common in academic writing, they also have a place in practical, workplace environments.

Task: After receiving feedback from your peers and me, revise your draft research question into a working research question. Be sure to address the criteria of an effective research question.

Under your draft research question, write a couple (2-3) sentences reflecting on the process of developing a research question. How did the peer review impact the evolution of your working research question?

Complete the Research Question Self-Assessment below.

Research Question Self-Assessment

- My research question requires research to answer.
- My research question prompts me to develop an argument that I will support with evidence.
- My research question can be answered with factual evidence and avoids any speculation, subjective responses, or bias.
- My research question is focused on a specific topic or issue.

Criteria: You will be evaluated on your completion of both the draft research question and the sentence explaining why you want to tackle this research question. Be sure to check the criteria of an effective research question using the self-assessment checklist below.