# Research Question Builder

DESN2003: Research for Innovation

# Research Question Builder — Blank Template

**Your Name:** _____ **Date:** _____

## 1. Start With Your Gap

What's the gap you identified from your Landscape Intelligence?

## 2. Question Type — Pick One

| Type | Template | Check |
|---|---|---|
| **Descriptive** | "What is happening with [phenomenon] among [population]?" | [ ] |
| **Relational** | "What is the relationship between [X] and [Y] in [context]?" | [ ] |
| **Causal** | "Does [intervention] cause [outcome] in [population]?" | [ ] |

## 3. Build Your Question — Fill In The Blanks

| Component | Your Answer |
|---|---|
| **WHO** (population) | |
| **WHAT** (phenomenon/intervention) | |
| **WHERE** (context) | |
| **OUTCOME** (what you're measuring) | |

**Draft Question:**

## 4. FINER Criteria Check

| Criterion | Question to Ask Yourself | Pass? |
|---|---|---|
| **F**easible | Can I actually do this in one semester with my resources? | [ ] |
| **I**nteresting | Do I genuinely care? Would others care? | [ ] |
| **N**ovel | Does this add something new (not already answered)? | [ ] |
| **E**thical | Can this be done without harming participants? | [ ] |
| **R**elevant | Does answering this matter to the field/industry? | [ ] |

**If any box is unchecked, revise your question before proceeding.**

## 5. Scope Check — The Goldilocks Test

| Too Broad | Just Right | Too Narrow |
|---|---|---|
| Can't answer in a lifetime<br>"How does technology affect society?" | Answerable in one semester<br>Your question here | Answer is trivial/obvious<br>"Is button A 2% better than B?" |

**Is your question "just right"?** [ ] Yes [ ] No — needs scoping

**If too broad, narrow by:** _____

**If too narrow, broaden by:** _____

## 6. Method Reality Check

Based on your question type, what method would you likely use?

| Question Type | Typical Methods |
|---|---|
| Descriptive | Surveys, interviews, observation |
| Relational | Correlational surveys, analytics |
| Causal | Experiments, A/B tests |

**My likely method:** _____

**Can I access the data/people I need?** [ ] Yes [ ] No [ ] Need to figure out

## 7. Final Research Question

Write your refined, final research question:

_____

_____

_____

**Credibility Check:** Could a stranger understand exactly what you're studying, who you're studying, and why it matters? [ ] Yes [ ] No

# Research Question Builder — Worked Example

**Your Name:** Alex Chen **Date:** Week 4

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## 1. Start With Your Gap

What's the gap you identified from your Landscape Intelligence?

**Instagram tested hiding likes in 2019, and research shows social comparison causes anxiety, but no study has measured whether hiding likes actually reduces anxiety — especially not in Asian contexts where social pressure dynamics differ.**

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## 2. Question Type — Pick One

| Type | Template | Check |
|---|---|---|
| **Descriptive** | "What is happening with [phenomenon] among [population]?" | [ ] |
| **Relational** | "What is the relationship between [X] and [Y] in [context]?" | [x] |
| **Causal** | "Does [intervention] cause [outcome] in [population]?" | [ ] |

*Note: I chose Relational because I can't run a true experiment (can't actually hide likes on Instagram). I can study the relationship between like-checking behavior and anxiety levels.*

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## 3. Build Your Question — Fill In The Blanks

| Component | Your Answer |
|---|---|
| **WHO** (population) | HKU undergraduate students aged 18-24 who use Instagram daily |
| **WHAT** (phenomenon/intervention) | Frequency of checking like counts on own posts |
| **WHERE** (context) | Daily Instagram use over a 2-week period |
| **OUTCOME** (what you're measuring) | Self-reported anxiety levels (using validated GAD-7 scale) |

**Draft Question:**

**"What is the relationship between frequency of checking Instagram like counts and self-reported anxiety levels among HKU undergraduate students during daily use?"**

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## 4. FINER Criteria Check

| Criterion | Question to Ask Yourself | Pass? |
|---|---|---|
| **F**easible | Can I recruit 50+ HKU students? Yes. Can I run a 2-week diary study? Yes. | [x] |

| Criterion | Question to Ask Yourself | Pass? |
|---|---|---|
| **I**nteresting | I use Instagram daily and feel this anxiety. My classmates talk about it. | [x] |
| **N**ovel | Existing research is Western-focused; HK/Asian context understudied. | [x] |
| **E**thical | Observational only, no manipulation, participants can withdraw anytime. | [x] |
| **R**elevant | Mental health + social media is a major concern; designers need this data. | [x] |

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## 5. Scope Check — The Goldilocks Test

| Too Broad | Just Right | Too Narrow |
|---|---|---|
| "How does Instagram affect mental health?" | "Relationship between like-checking frequency and anxiety in HKU students" | "Do students check likes more on Tuesdays?" |

**Is your question "just right"?** [x] Yes [ ] No

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## 6. Method Reality Check

**My likely method:** Mixed methods — diary study (quantitative: daily anxiety ratings + like-checking frequency) + exit interviews (qualitative: why do you check?)

**Can I access the data/people I need?** [x] Yes — I can recruit through HKU student groups and my own network

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## 7. Final Research Question

**"What is the relationship between Instagram like-checking frequency and daily anxiety levels among HKU undergraduate students (aged 18-24), and what motivations drive this checking behavior?"**

**Credibility Check:** [x] Yes — A stranger knows: who (HKU undergrads), what (like-checking vs anxiety), and why it matters (mental health + design implications)