Guidelines for Students

The Description and Explanation of the Research Process carries the most weight in the judging for the EKU Libraries Research Award for Undergraduates, followed by the Bibliography. The points below are designed to guide you in focusing on the most important elements in the Description and Explanation of the Research Process, and the Bibliography.

Score Card

Research Component	Point Value
Description & Explanation of the Research Process	20
Bibliography	15
Completed Project	10
Supporting Letter	5
Total Possible:	**50**

Description & Explanation of the Research Process

The **800-1000 word** Description and Explanation of the Research Process is the most important piece of your submission and carries more points than any other application component, including the project itself.

The Description and Explanation of the Research Process is your opportunity to reflect on the research process, to communicate the specifics of that process, and to give a sense of how your ideas and methodology changed as your research progressed. The review panel is interested in your ability to perform undergraduate-level research, and expects *the Description and Explanation of the Research Process to fully describe and explain the process and methods by which you searched for, selected, acquired, and evaluated the information that went into the development of your project.* An accomplished researcher relies not only on comprehensive searches and methods, but allows the initial and intermediate results of those searches and methods to shape the final product. As such, the review panel is interested also in the growth both of your project and of your skills as a researcher. As you develop the description and explanation of your research process, consider the following questions and suggestions (you do not need to systematically answer each question, but rather use them as a guide):

Developing research strategies:

Describe, in detail, your search strategies--both the successes and the problematic searches:

- Tell us what you learned about the process of doing research and why you made the choices you did.
- How did you think about and refine your preliminary research topic? How did you modify your original thesis as a result of what you discovered during your library research?
- Reflect upon the process of adapting your interests to the scope of the project, the time you had available for research and writing, the required length of the project, and the nature of the information you found.
- What specific strategies did you develop for finding and using relevant information?
- What discoveries did you make by chance, and which were made through planned search strategies? How did these events impact each other?
- Highlight the strong points of your use of your sources in supporting your thesis or argument.
- How much of your research was done independently? Did you seek and/or receive guidance from others in how to locate or best utilize the resources available to you?

Evaluating search tools & information:

What specifically did you discover about tools and techniques for research? Tell us *specifically* which research tools and strategies you used (research databases, library catalogs, websites, bibliographies, etc.), but in an evaluative way -- not just a list of things you tried.

- Is there a particular tool that you felt was invaluable to your research during the creation of this project?
- What did you learn about finding and evaluating information on your topic or in your discipline?
- What criteria did you use to evaluate your sources?
- Were there databases, finding aids, or other resources not usually associated with your topic area that turned out to be useful? If so, which ones and why?
- Did you have trouble finding some kinds of information? *Describe your decision-making process for solving this challenge.*
- What were some of your reasons for not selecting specific sources, even though they appeared promising?
- Were you able to recognize bias or contradictions in information sources? *Tell us how you reconciled differing viewpoints encountered throughout the course of your research process, how you balanced differing viewpoints with your own pre-existing opinions, and how it influenced your choice of resources.*

Finally, take a look at the scoring rubric at the Library Research Award for Undergraduates website by which submissions are judged.

Prize-winning examples may be found at the Library Research Award for Undergraduates website, along with Description and Explanation of the Research Process essay.

Bibliography

When preparing your bibliography keep in mind these points:
- Format your bibliography using a style guide appropriate to your project's discipline.
- To help the judges understand your unique set of resources, it may be advisable--although it is not required--to include an explanatory note identifying specific characteristics of the sources that were important in your selection and use for your project.

Supporting Letter

- Your instructor must compose and send a letter of nomination for you and your paper or project to kevin.jones@eku.edu
- The nominating faculty member must have been the instructor or mentor of record in the course for which the research project was completed.
- Ask your instructor to read Information for Faculty Nominators which is located at the Library Research Award for Undergraduates website.
- Send your instructor or mentor a copy of your research project to re-read. In addition, send a draft of your Description and Explanation of the Research Process. This will help him/her to write a better letter of support.
- Send your instructor a reminder email or phone call a few days before the deadline.

Final Version of Completed Project

Projects in all media are encouraged!

- Written reports should be double-spaced. There are no other formatting requirements.
- There are no page requirements outside of the requirements of the discipline and/or original project guidelines.
- Digital projects may be in any common digital format. If the file is too large to email (>10MB), you can copy the files to DVD or CD and send them to Kevin Jones at Library 204P by the due date.