



# Alignment: The Key to a Strong Dissertation

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# Goals for this Presentation

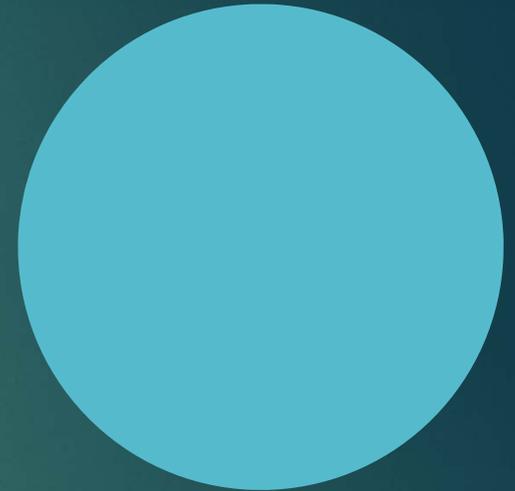


1. Understand what alignment means in terms of a dissertation
2. Understanding why alignment is critical to a dissertation
3. Knowing the components of a dissertation involved with alignment.
4. Group discussion to design these components and test their alignment

# Alignment Items



1. Problem Statement
2. Purpose Statement
3. Research Questions
4. Items on your Instruments



# Using an Alignment Matrix to Visualize

ALL  
ITEMS  
ARE  
IN  
A  
ROW





The following is an example of an  
Alignment Matrix.  
We're going to complete today.

## Problem Statement

## Purpose Statement

Research Questions	Data Collection Instrument or Method (What instruments or artifacts will be used to answer each RQ? Give the name of the survey, interview instrument or describe the documents.)	Item on that Instrument (What specific question on the instrument in the column to the left will be used to answer each RQ?. You do not have to write the questions down, just identify them by number. For example "Survey Question 3 and 9" or "Interview Question 2".)
RQ1:		
RQ2:		
RQ3:		



## The Problem Statement: The Bones of your Study.

A good problem is an issue or difficulty of some significance, urgency, and priority whose investigation will make a useful contribution to knowledge.

If you already know the answer to your problem, if the answer can be found by a simple search of existing studies, or is totally predictable, there is no need to do the study.



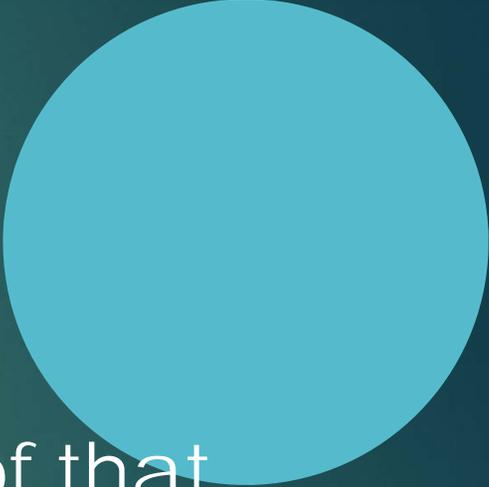
## Types of Problems You Could Study

1. An actual situation that is hindering the overall effectiveness of an organization
2. A theoretical or clinical question confronting the researcher



REMEMBER!

The **LACK** of something  
is **not** a problem.



It's what's happening **because** of that  
lack that is the problem

# Problem Statement

- ▶ WHAT IS THE PROBLEM? Not a "question", "topic.", or "lack" of something. **It is a single statement that notes what is wrong or needs to be addressed.**
- ▶ It is **NOT** why it's a problem, nor how you plan on addressing it.
  - ▶ WHY IS IT A PROBLEM? Reason for and significance of problem. These could be the "LACK" of something
  - ▶ PROOF? Show the reader evidence that the problem actually exists
  - ▶ Who has done what about research on this problem?

# Sample Problem Statement



There is a high level of attrition  
at a local community college





Let's put that in an  
Alignment Matrix

**Problem Statement : There is a high level of attrition at a local community college.**

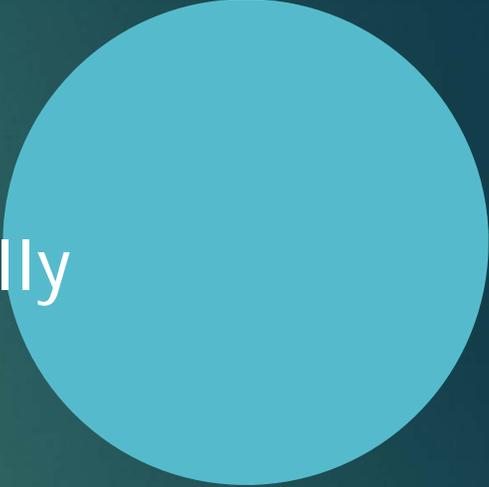
## Purpose Statement

Research Questions	Data Collection Instrument or Method (What instruments or artifacts will be used to answer each RQ? Give the name of the survey, interview instrument or describe the documents.)	Item on that Instrument (What specific question on the instrument in the column to the left will be used to answer each RQ?. You do not have to write the questions down, just identify them by number. For example "Survey Question 3 and 9" or "Interview Question 2".)
RQ1:		
RQ2:		
RQ3:		



ONCE YOU STATE THE PROBLEM,  
MOVE TO EVIDENCE AND SIGNIFICANCE

Once you've formulated the problem, you need EVIDENCE to show the problem actually exists.



1. Public or archival data
2. Anecdotal Data

# Let's move from the Problem Statement to Purpose Statement

- ▶ A **research problem** is an educational issue, controversy, or concern that guides the need for conducting the study.
- ▶ **Evidence of the Existence of the Problem**-Proof the problem exists at the local research site.
- ▶ **Significance**-why the problem is critical to solve
- ▶ **Purpose of the Study** - the major intent or objective of the researcher. What is your goal?



Define the components and elements of the problem.

Give a brief description of

- the setting where the research study will take place

- the profile of the organization and other pertinent general background information

- other relevant information as determined by the committee

Discuss the feasibility of the research study within the context of your role within the organization.

Address gaps in the research literature and the rationale for your study (Deficiencies in the Evidence).

# Creation of the Purpose Statement



Based on goals to alleviate or reduce the problem, you create your Purpose Statement



*The purpose of this study is to discover what are the perceptions of current first-year students at a local 2-year college regarding their retention.*

# Moving from the Problem to the Purpose

<b>Topic</b>	<b>There is a high rate of attrition of students at a local community college</b>
<b>Problem Statement</b>	<b>Distance education</b>
<b>Evidence</b>	<b>At the local 2-year college, 28% of first-year students drop out before the end of their 2<sup>nd</sup> semester</b>
<b>Significance</b>	<b>Critical to job market and enrollment numbers of 4-year colleges</b>
<b>Purpose Statement</b>	<b>The purpose of this study is to discover what are the perceptions of current first-year students at a local 2-year college regarding their retention.</b>



**Problem Statement : There is a high level of attrition at a local community college.**

**Purpose Statement: To discover what are the perceptions of current first-year students at a local 2-year college regarding their retention.**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Collection Instrument or Method</b> (What instruments or artifacts will be used to answer each RQ? Give the name of the survey, interview instrument or describe the documents.)	<b>Item on that Instrument</b> (What specific question on the instrument in the column to the left will be used to answer each RQ?. You do not have to write the questions down, just identify them by number. For example "Survey Question 3 and 9" or "Interview Question 2" .)
<b>RQ1:</b>		
<b>RQ2:</b>		
<b>RQ3:</b>		

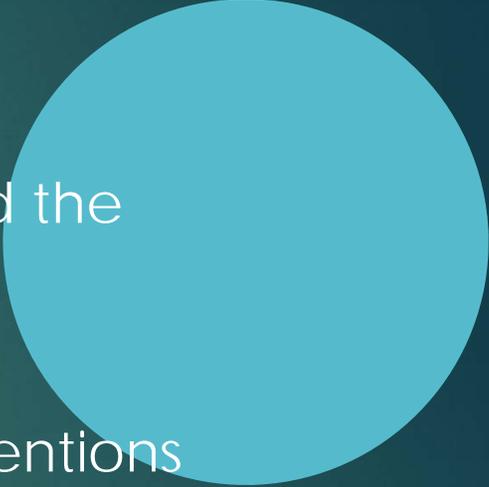
You've created your  
Problem and Purpose Statements

Now, let's move on to  
the literature review.



Start by listing at least 5 Keywords  
You could use to start your  
Literature Search

# PLANNING THE LIT REVIEW



Make sure the lit review has the following:

- ▶ What the literature says may have caused the problem
- ▶ What the literature says are proven Interventions to solve the problem
- ▶ Opposing points of view on both of the above

# Research Questions



- ▶ Taking your problem and purpose statements and what you found in the literature, let's create at least 3 research questions (RQs):

## HINTS:

- ▶ The RQs should be something you can only answer by conducting the local study. If the answer can be found in the literature, you don't need to do the study
- ▶ Note whether the questions are qualitative or quantitative.

**Problem Statement : There is a high level of attrition at a local community college.**

**Purpose Statement: To discover what are the perceptions of current first-year students at a local 2-year college regarding their retention.**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b>Data Collection Instrument or Method (What instruments or artifacts will be used to answer each RQ?)</b>	<b>Item on that Instrument (What specific question on the instrument in the column to the left will be used to answer each RQ?)</b>
<b>RQ1: What are some of the reasons students are not completing their 2-year studies at a local community college?</b>		
<b>RQ2: What initiatives did students note the college should provide to help retain them?</b>		

# Creating Questions to Answer those Research Questions

Once you have your RQs, it's time to design (or use another's) instrument or data to get YOUR needed quantitative or qualitative data.

IT'S CRITICAL THAT THAT WHAT YOU HAVE ALIGNMENT:

Problem Statement

Purpose Statement

Research Questions

Instrument Questions or Artifact Items

**Problem Statement : There is a high level of attrition at a local community college.**

**Purpose Statement: To discover what are the perceptions of current first-year students at a local 2-year college regarding their retention.**

<b>Research Questions</b>	<b><u>Data Collection</u></b> Instrument or Method (What instruments or artifacts will be used to answer each RQ?)	<b><u>Item on that Instrument</u></b> (What specific question on the instrument in the column to the left will be used to answer each RQ?)
<b>RQ1: What are some of the reasons students are not completing their 2-year studies at a local community college?</b>	<b>Student Survey</b>	<b>Questions 1,2,5, and 7</b>
<b>RQ2: What did students offer are initiatives the college could provide to help retain them as students?</b>	<b>Student Survey</b>	<b>Questions 4,6, 7, and 13.</b>

# YOUR TURN-Complete an Alignment Matrix

## Step 1

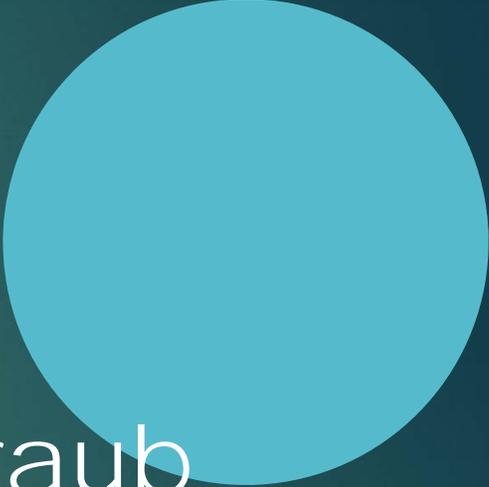
Write down your problem and purpose statements

## Step 2

Generate at least 2 research questions

## Step 3

Tell us what instruments or documents you will use to answer those questions.



▶ For more info

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