Defining Your Topic

The one-sentence problem statement

You start with a topic idea. Now you will narrow it down to the who, what, when and where for your culminating project. You are trying to change behavior through learning, but there are so many ways to do that.

If you can clearly define your mission, you will be better able to plan the route you will need to take for success and plan a timeline for the coming year. The problem statement is a precise way of summarizing a project.
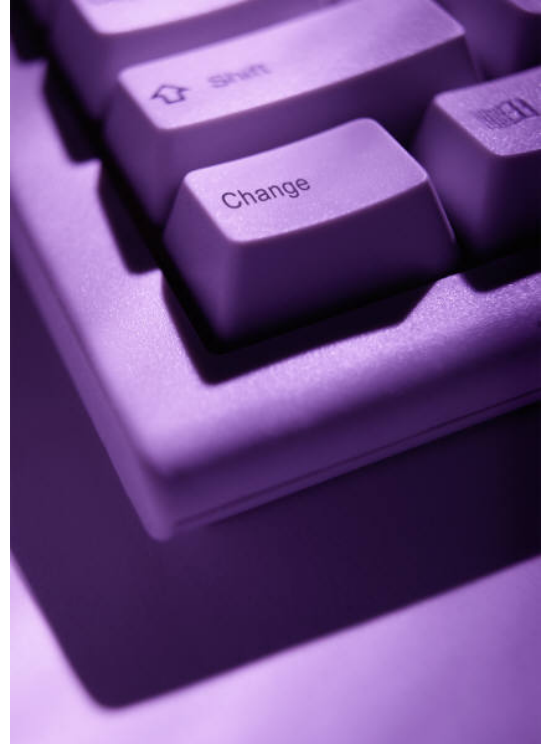
What is a problem statement?

The general problem statement looks like this:

> The purpose of this instructional design project/action research study is to [*verb*: assess, understand, evaluate, improve, etc.] the [*topic*, effect, result] for [participants/ students] at [site].

Notice how this tells not only the kind of project, but who it the target audience and where they might be located. See the end of the assignment sheet for examples.

How you will use your problem statement

The problem statement will appear in the first paragraph of your idea paper. Sometimes this is the first sentence, but you may write an initial sentence that states the problem or gap to which this statement is the response. Even before your write the idea paper, you will submit your statement for evaluation.

Assignment details

DUE	Draft due before class on **Friday, Sept. 3** Final due on **Final, Sept. 7**
HOW TO SUBMIT	Post in Google site on your page
ASSESSMENT	15 points maximum for problem statement and idea paper. See **checklist** below for specific criteria

Hints for Good Problem Statements

Your goal is writing a good problem statement is to be as specific as possible about your project. For example, if you were doing a module on world history, your sentence will be better is the topic is "the role of writing on the development of complex societies" rather than "early writing." And indicating that this is for students in an introductory course for undergraduates at UH-Manoa is better than just saying "college students."

Examples of acceptable problem statements

The purpose of this **needs assessment** is to **understand** the **requirements for professional development for teaching online** for **new faculty** at **a community college on Oahu**.

The purpose of this **ID project** is to **develop and evaluate** a **video-based instructional module** for orienting **students** to online learning at a **virtual high school**.

The purpose of this **action research project** is to **evaluate** the **use of video creation to enhance the learning of multicultural perspectives** for **10th grade students** at **a high school in Honolulu**.

Assessment

Your goal is to come up with an approved problem statement that is both clearly stated in terms of the problem statement structure, as well as defines a project that is appropriate in scope and depth for a culminating ETEC presentation. There is not a grade for this activity. Rather, you will either get full points or no credit.

To help you, there will be a draft version submitted for feedback from your peers and instructors. You must consider the feedback in your final version.

Problem Statement Checklist

All must be in place to get credit for the assignment

_____ The problem statement follows the format given and is a single sentence.

_____ The statement indicates the kind of project you will be doing

_____ The problem statement uses an active verb that describes the end-goal of your project (typically what you will get out of it, rather than a student who goes through the process you create)

_____ The topic is specific rather than generalized

_____ The topic is appropriate for an ETEC culminating project (scope is doable by end of final semester and incorporates the learning you have done in the program)

_____ The target audience is limited to a specified population (i.e., students is insufficient)

_____ Feedback from peers and instructors was used to improve the statement.