

Academic book idea workbook

Use this workbook to evaluate whether your research has the potential to become an academic book and identify areas that require further development before you prepare a proposal.

Estimated completion time: 20–30 minutes

Part I: Define the project

Working title:

In one sentence, what is your book about?

What is the central research question?

What is the main argument?

Complete the sentences:

Most scholars assume _____

This book argues _____



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Part II: Assess the contribution

What is the primary contribution of this book? Tick all that apply:

- ☐ Understudied topic
- ☐ New evidence or sources
- ☐ New theoretical approach
- ☐ New methodology
- ☐ Interdisciplinary perspective
- ☐ Reinterpretation of existing scholarship
- ☐ Other

Why does this contribution matter?

What will readers learn from this book that they cannot learn elsewhere?



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Part III: Evaluate the audience

Who is the primary audience? Tick all that apply.

- ☐ Specialists in my field
- ☐ Researchers in several disciplines
- ☐ Postgraduate students
- ☐ Advanced undergraduate students
- ☐ Practitioners or professionals
- ☐ Policymakers
- ☐ Other

Why would this audience read my book?



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Part IV: Review competing titles

List three recent books that address a similar topic.

Title	Author	How does my book differ?

What unique contribution will my book make?



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Part V: Test the scope

List potential chapters.

Chapter	Main topic	Evidence available
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
5.		
6.		

Can you identify at least six chapters that contribute directly to the main argument?

☐ Yes

☐ No



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Part VI: Book or journal article?

Answer the following questions by ticking all that apply.

Does the project:

- ☐ address a broad problem rather than a single question?
- ☐ require multiple chapters?
- ☐ draw a substantial body of evidence?
- ☐ contribute to a larger scholarly debate?
- ☐ offer more than one key insight or finding?
- ☐ have the potential to interest a wider scholarly audience?

Results:

0–2 ticks: The project may work better as a journal article.

2–4 ticks: The project may require further work before becoming a book.

5–6 ticks: The project may have strong potential as an academic book.



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Part VII: Proposal readiness checklist

Before preparing a book proposal, can you answer the following questions?

- ☐ What is the central argument?
- ☐ Who is the target audience?
- ☐ What gap in the literature does this book address?
- ☐ How does it differ from competing titles?
- ☐ Can the topic support multiple chapters?
- ☐ Is sufficient evidence available?
- ☐ Can the contribution be explained in two or three sentences?
- ☐ Have you identified suitable publishers?

Next steps:

If you answered 'yes' to most of the questions in the above checklist, the next step is to develop a provisional chapter outline and begin preparing a book proposal.

Remember: a successful academic book does not simply present research. It advances a clear argument, contributes to scholarly debates and provides readers with a new way of understanding a topic.

