

# Thesis research skills for Undergraduates in Politics and Economics

## Building a structured search

An example of one possible approach...

<b><u>Building a search for my research question:</u></b>			
<b><u>Marijuana legalisation</u></b> at the <b><u>ballot box</u></b> : iteration and interactivity in the <i>ballot initiative process</i>			
Row 1	Concept 1: Marijuana	Concept 2: Legalisation	Concept 3: Ballot (box)
Row 2	marijuana pot cannabis	Legalisation decriminalisation drug policy reform	vote referendum poll
Row 3	marijuana OR pot OR cannabis	Legali?ation OR decrim* OR "drug policy"	Vot* OR referend* OR poll*
Row 4	<b>#1 AND #2 AND #3</b> (N.B. # means search number)		

## Building a structured search – task

Write your **research question** (or if you don't have one, a brief sentence about a research interest) in the top box.

**Row 1.** Identify the **key concepts** in the research question and write one in each concept box (you may have more, or less, than 3 concepts).

**Row 2.** In the column under each concept brainstorm **alternative terms** which might be useful (e.g. synonyms, alternative spellings, broader/narrower/related terms.)

**Row 3:** Decide on your **search terms** and note down **truncation and Boolean operators** as appropriate.

**Row 4:** Complete the search strategy by **combining** your search sets.

<b>Research Question:</b>			
<b>Row 1</b>	<b>Concept 1:</b>	<b>Concept 2:</b>	<b>Concept 3:</b>
<b>Row 2</b>			
<b>Row 3</b>	#1 =	#2 =	#3 =
<b>Row 4</b>	#1 AND #2 AND #3 (or as appropriate to your search)		