

The Term Paper

Length:

Übung/Proseminar (6+ Credits): 12-15 pages

Hauptseminar (6+ Credits): 15-20 pages

- 12pt, 1.5 line spacing, Times New Roman, not including title page, table of contents, bibliography, statement of autonomy

Sources:

Übung/Proseminar: primary sources: at least 1 novel or 2 short stories/poems or 2 audio/visual examples

secondary sources: at least 3 theoretical/secondary texts

Hauptseminar: primary sources: at least 1 novel or 2 short stories/poems or 2 audio/visual examples

secondary sources: at least 5 theoretical/secondary texts

Submission

Deadline: September 30, 2021.

All topics must be approved in office hour or email.

Hand in your paper as PDF only (Save Paper!) -> moritz.ingwersen@tu-dresden.de

What is a term paper and why do I have to write one?

- academic format of writing about a particular subject in the humanities
- main purpose: practice and prove your abilities in
 - a) analysis of a literary/cultural text
 - b) working with research literature and academic sources on a clearly focussed issue

The Term Paper Proposal

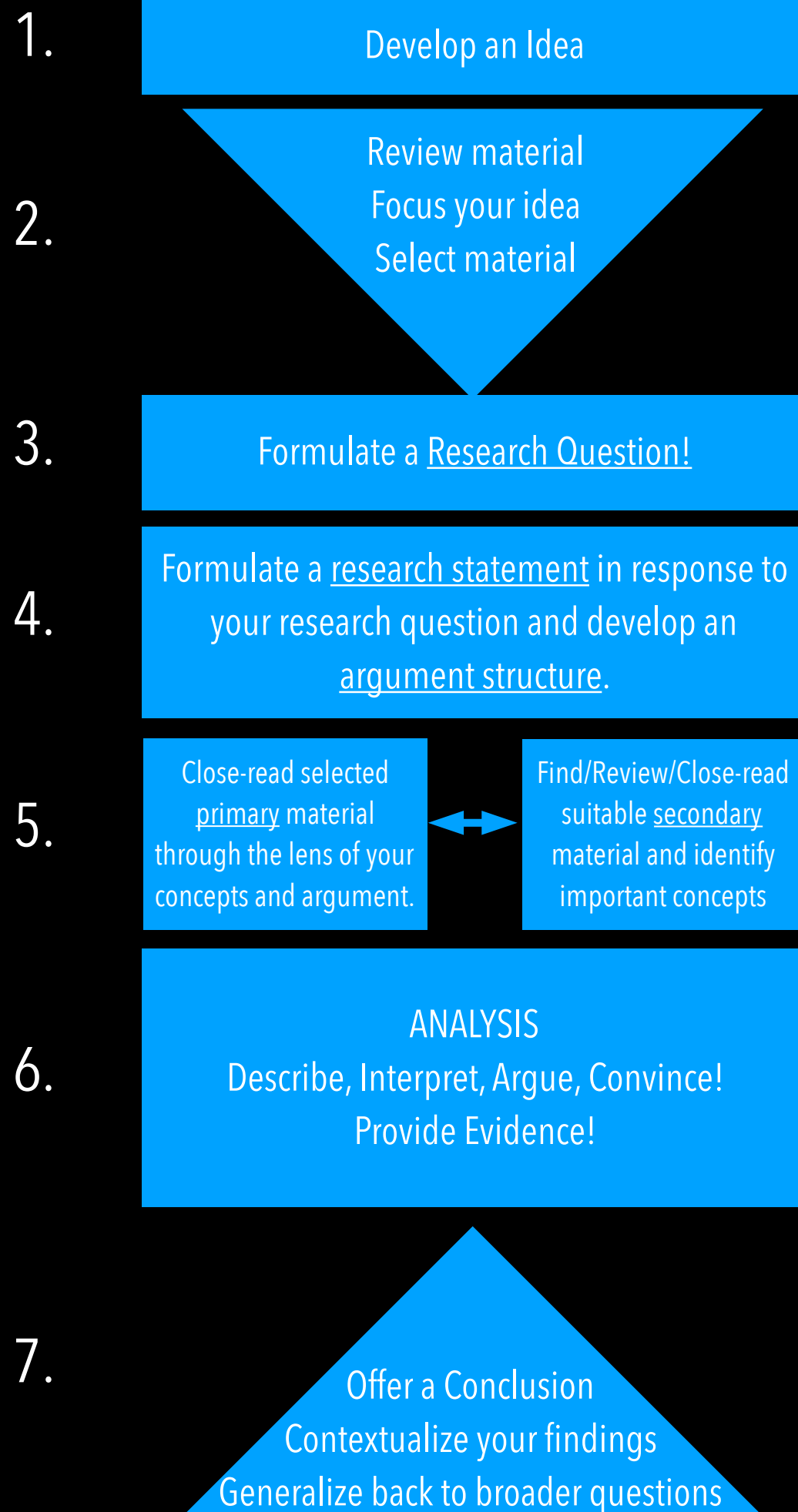
Due: July 26, 2021

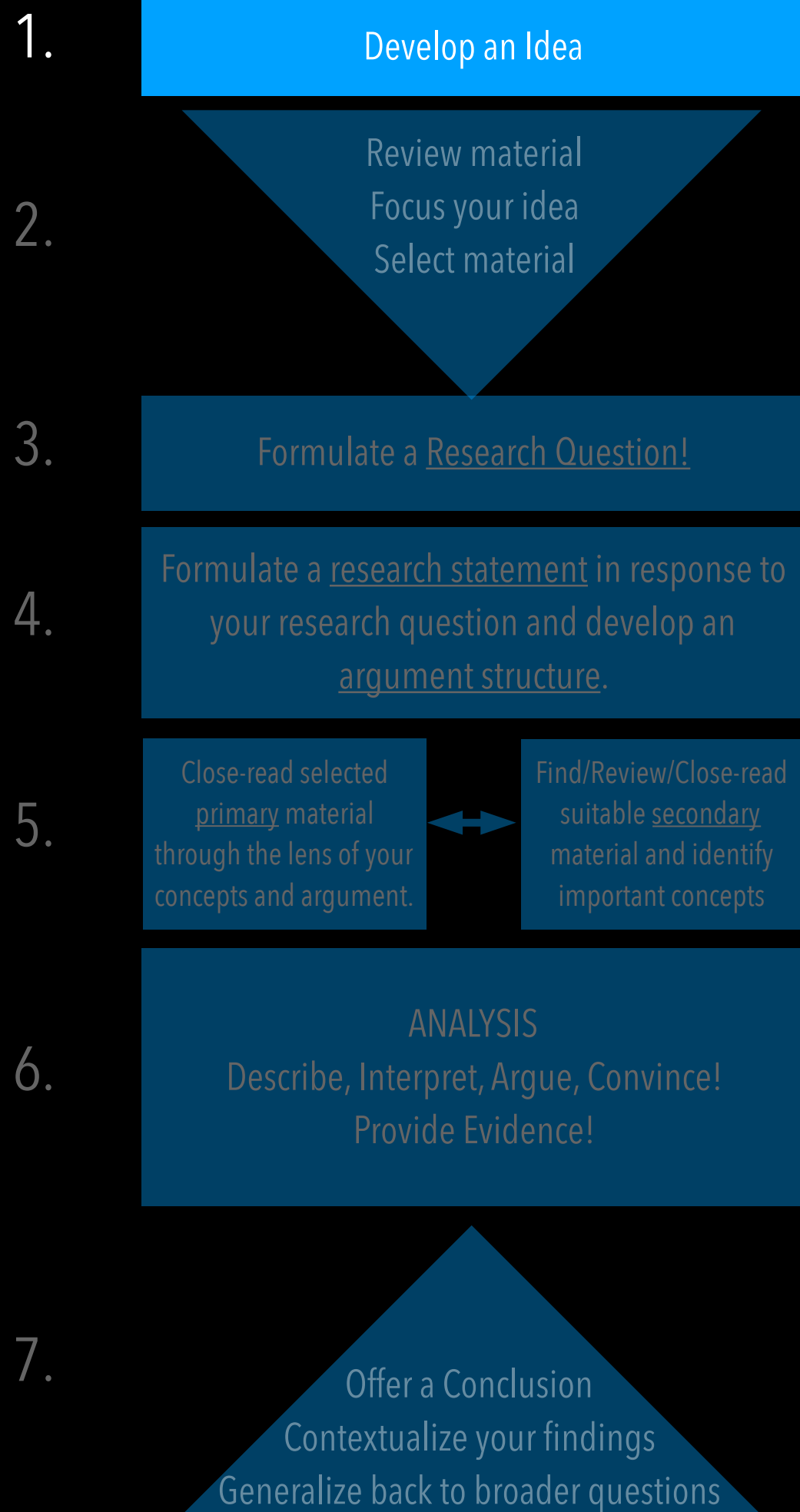
Length: approx. 1 page

ungraded, will serve as the basis for office hour meeting

- Things to include:
- Tentative Title (or title idea)
 - Tentative Research Question and Research Statement
 - Indication of anticipated primary and secondary material
 - First thoughts on argument structure
 - Relation to the course material/context

The Research Process



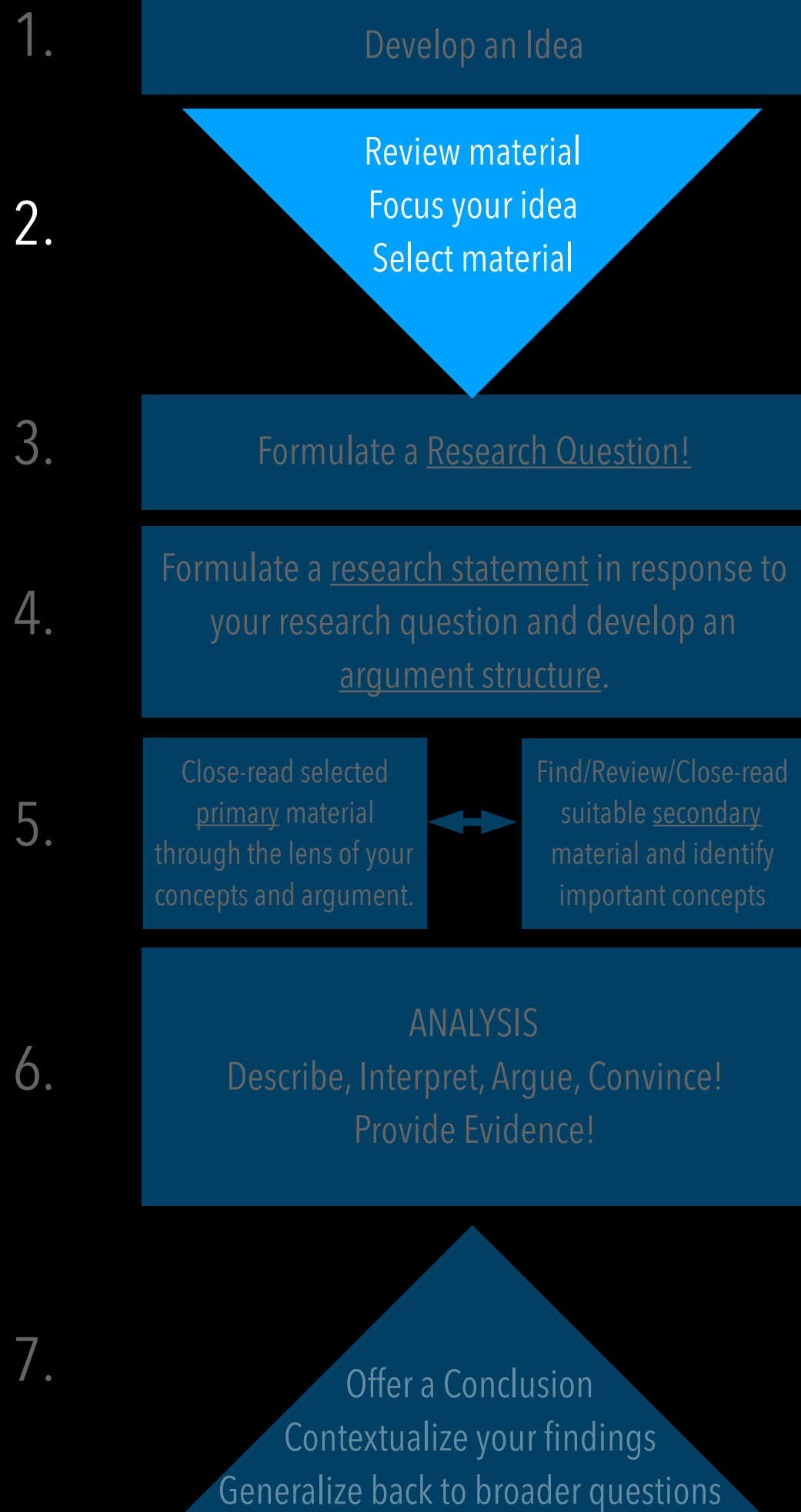


1. Developing an Idea

...is a crucial part of the process of writing a term paper!

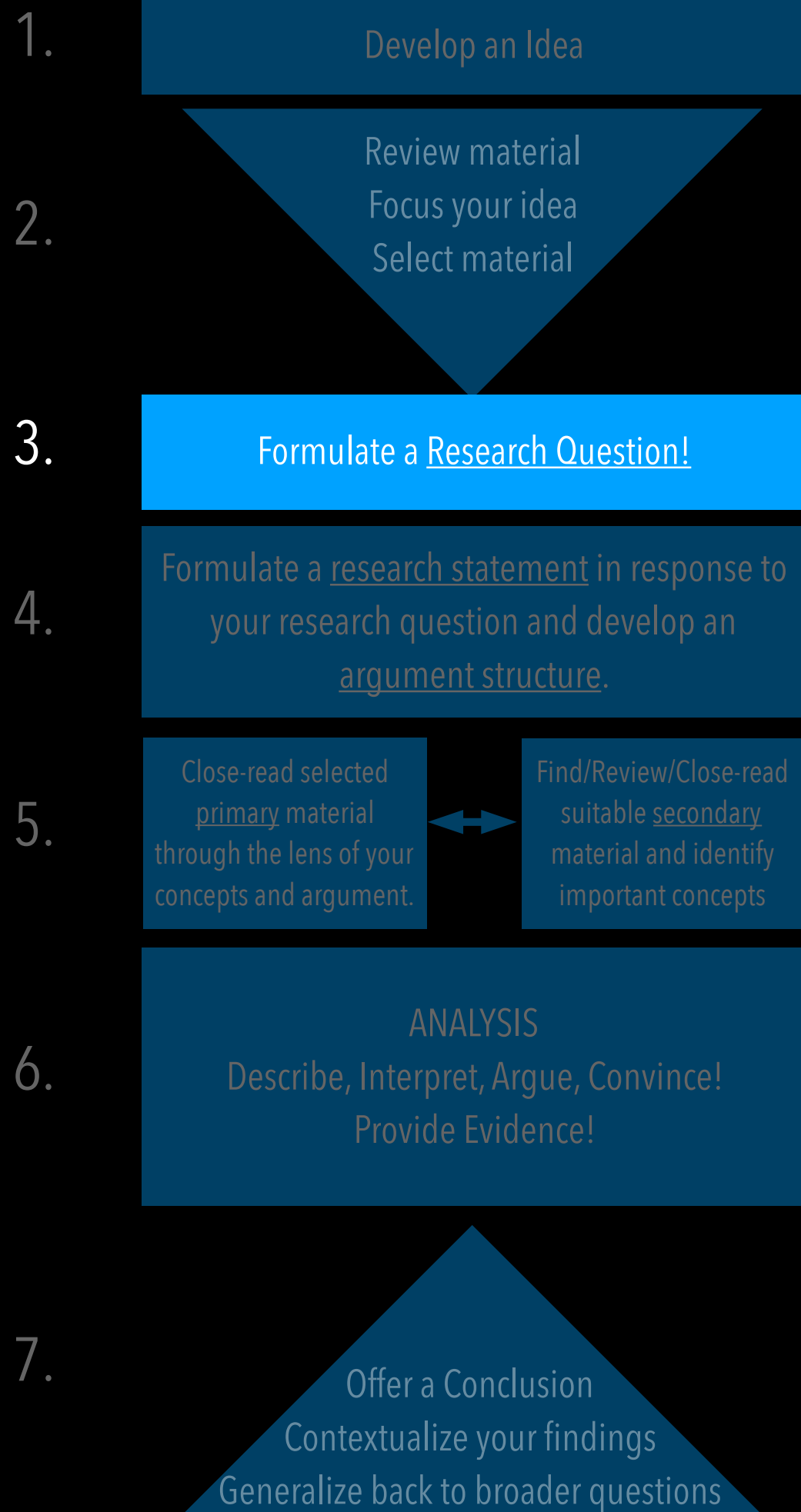
...needs to directly relate to the seminar

- Review your class notes and the course material!
- Which aspects were of special interest to you?
- Which questions emerge from the material?
- What would you like to find out and argue?
- Which relationships can you establish among the material?
- Start with open questions!
- What is their broader context?



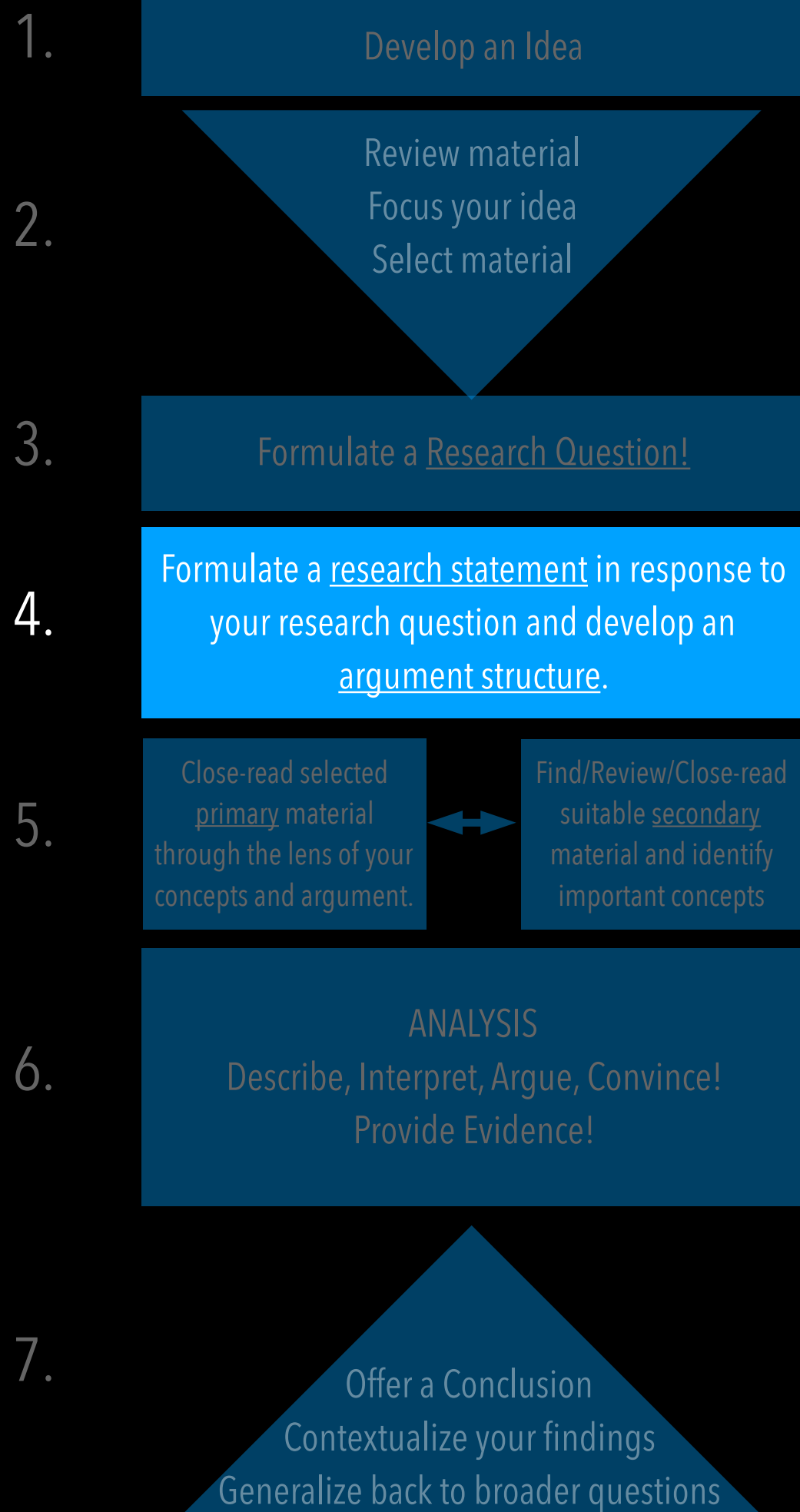
2. Narrowing Down

- Review the material and select your primary objects of analysis (texts, images, video, etc.).
- Focus your idea with respect to your selection.
- Adjust your idea and questions as necessary.



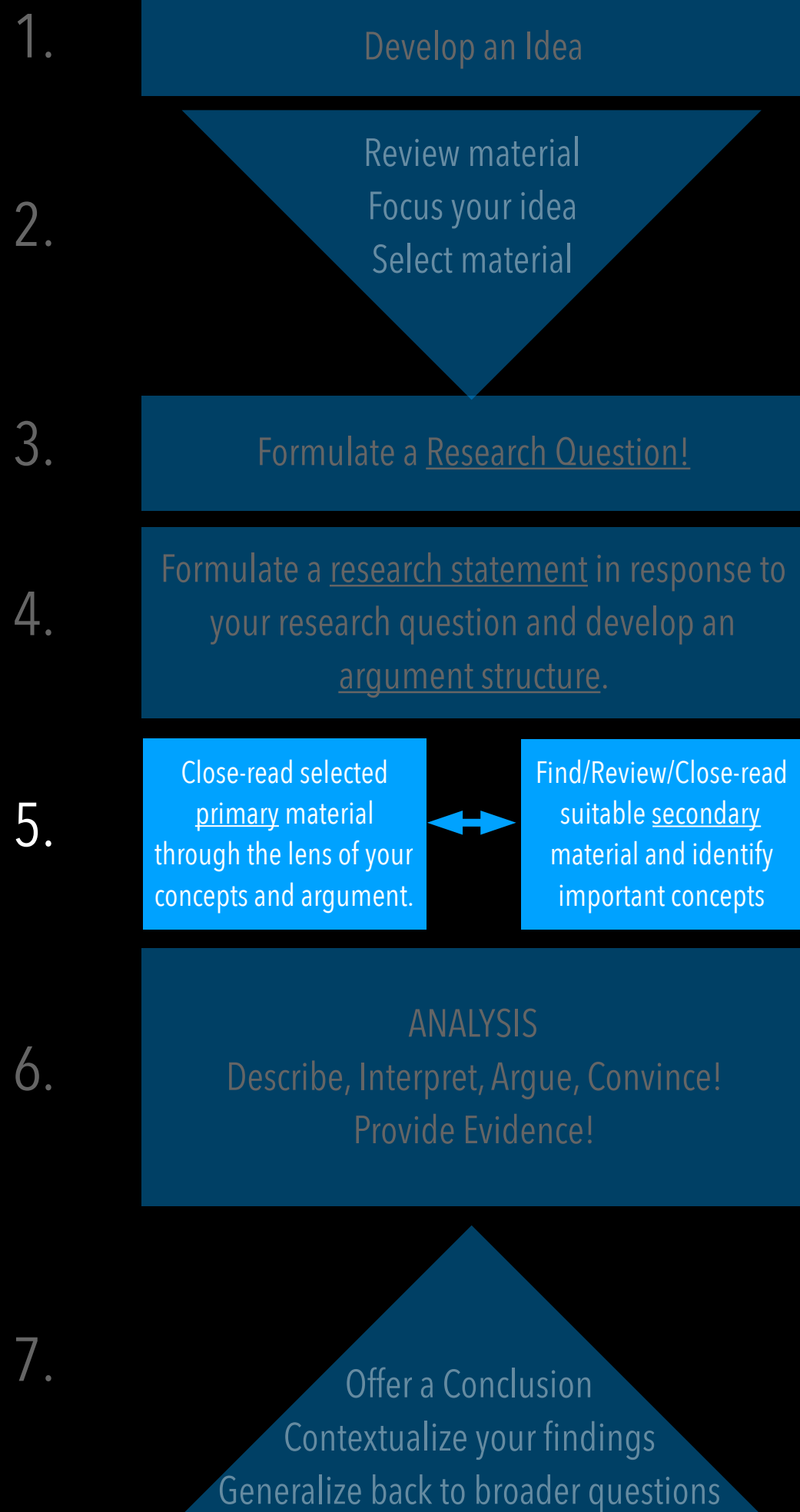
3. Research Question

- What do you want to find out?
- Which texts/objects do you want to examine?
- Which aspects of the texts/objects do you want to address?
- How do these aspects relate to the course topic?
- Which conceptual frameworks can be used to examine the texts?
- How can your question lead to a critical argument about the relationship between the texts and concepts?
- Make sure that it is researchable within the bounds of a cultural/literary analysis!
- Use an open question (no closed yes/no questions)!



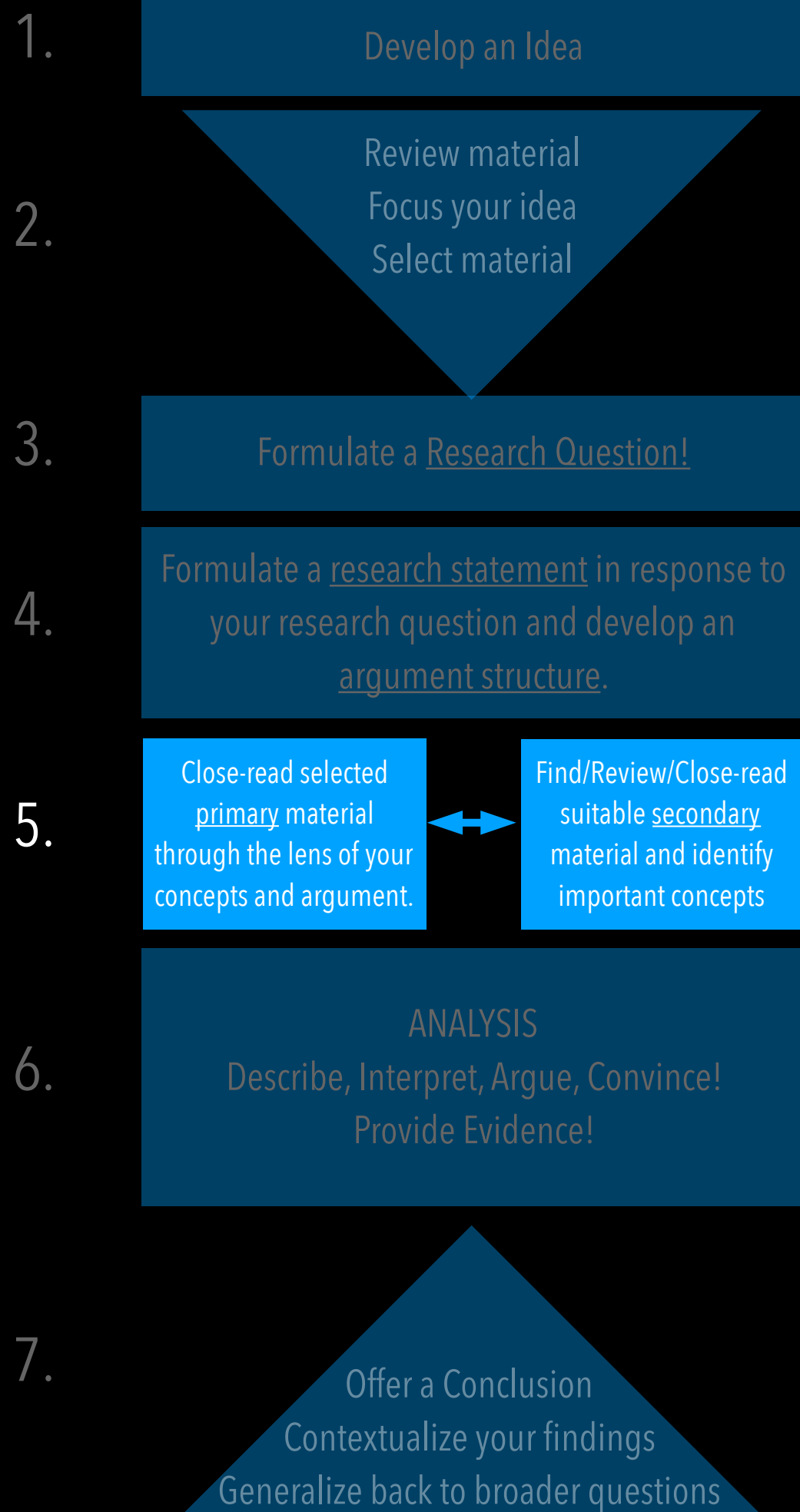
4. Research Statement and Argument Structure

- Proposes a critical argument in response to your research question.
- Makes a "promise" of what your paper is going to do
 - –Keep it!
- Offers a position on the topic.
- Introduces critical terminology and context.
- Introduces the structure of your argument.
- Decide on the structure of your argument and suitable chapter foci!
- Which analytical steps does your research statement require?
- Use specific language. The more specific you are in formulating your statement, the easier it will be to keep the topic manageable and to structure your paper.
- Research Statement must be clearly stated in the introduction of your paper!



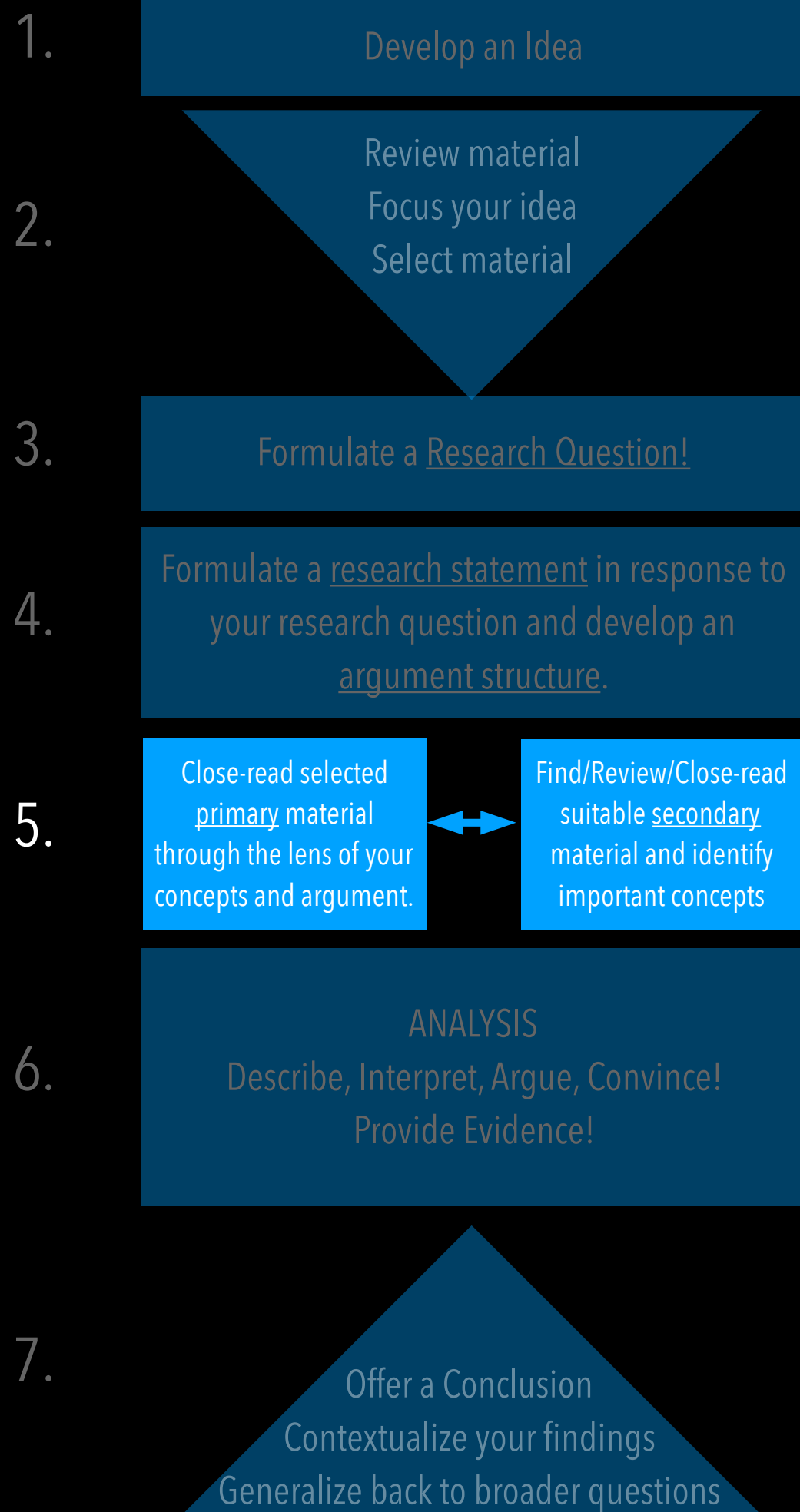
5. Close-Reading

- Carefully close-read your primary material with regard to your proposed argument.
- Identify and collect key passages that you would like to use as evidence.
- Establish a dialogue with secondary/theoretical material.
- Find and select useful secondary material.
- Which concepts/contextual information does the secondary material offer to support and frame your argument?
- Identify important concepts and collect key passages/definitions/arguments that you would like to use as evidence.



5. Finding Secondary Material

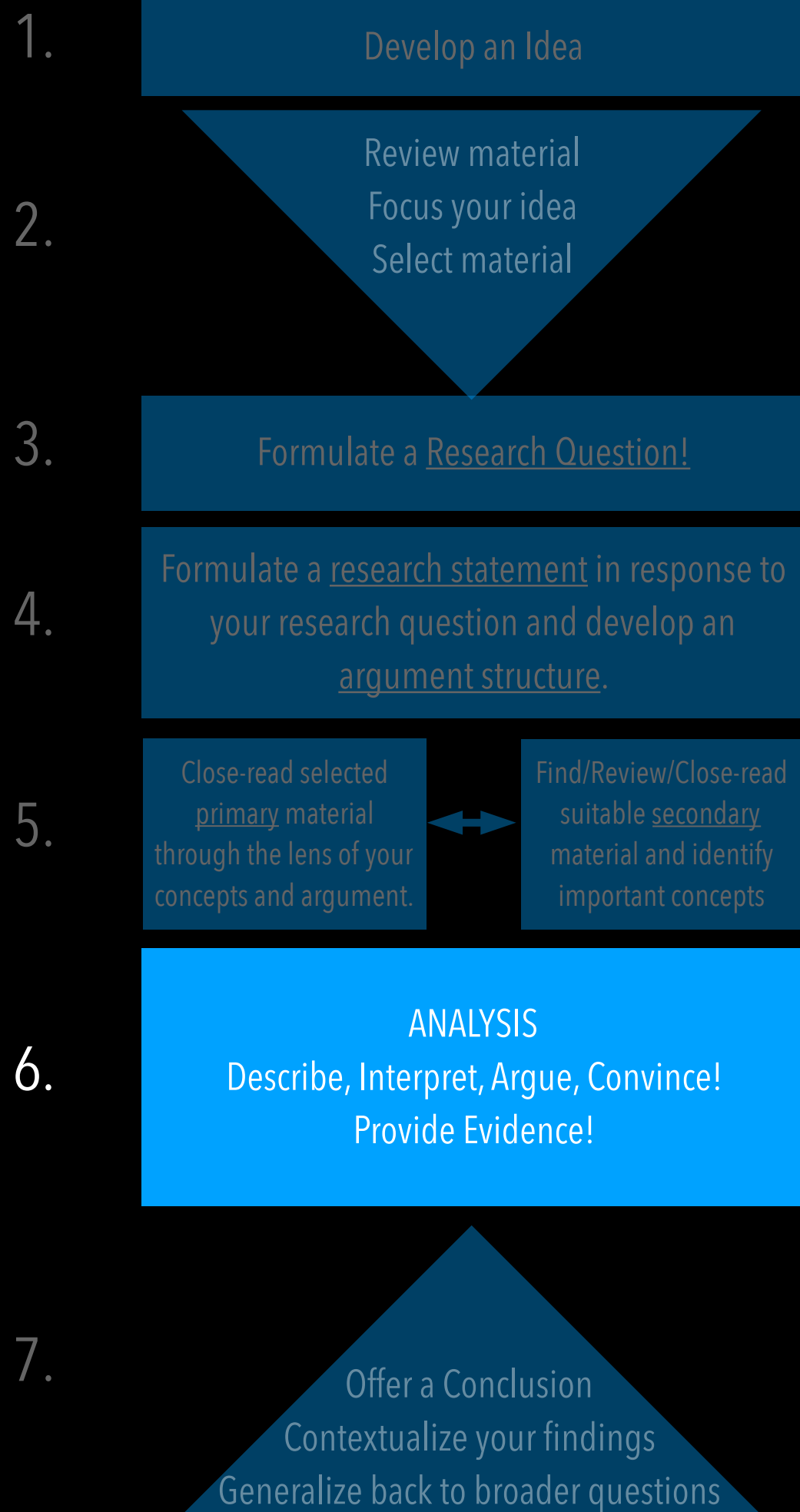
- Review the theoretical/secondary material used in the course.
- Check the Further Reading section on OPAL.
- Ask your instructor for directions.
- Use the SLUB library services to locate suitable secondary material.
- Come up with suitable keywords and contexts to locate secondary material.
- For articles, see <https://www.jstor.org>



5. Reading Secondary Material

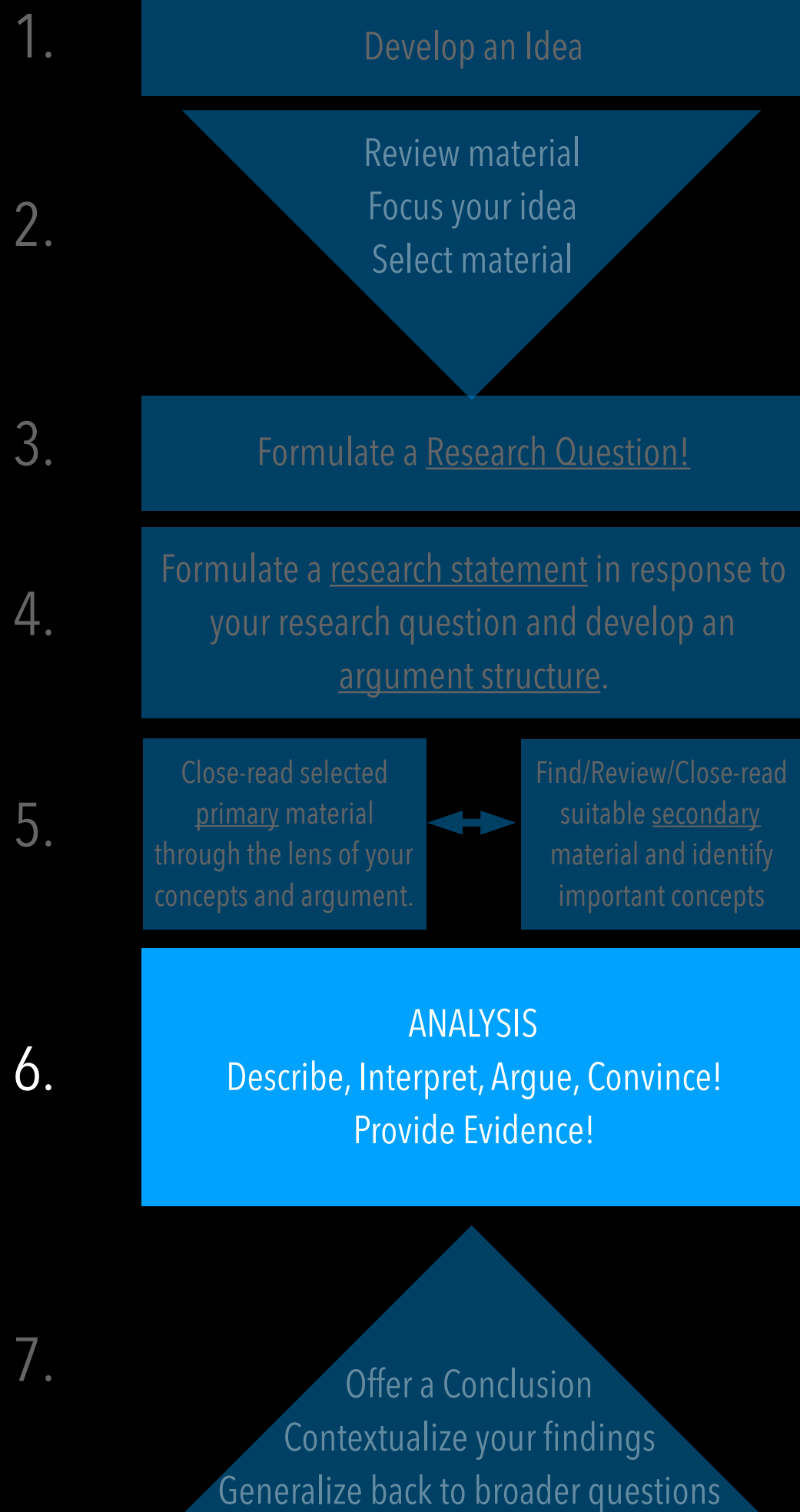
Read Critically!

- Is it relevant for my argument?
- Does it offer useful concepts that I can use and refer to?
- Does it support my reading?
- Does it provide appropriate contextualizing information?
- Does it offer a contradictory interpretation but nevertheless allows me to maintain my own idea and reading?
- Does it force me to change my mind?
- Do I disagree? Can I try to contradict it?
- Underline, excerpt, and collect useful passages and quotes for your analysis



6. Analysis

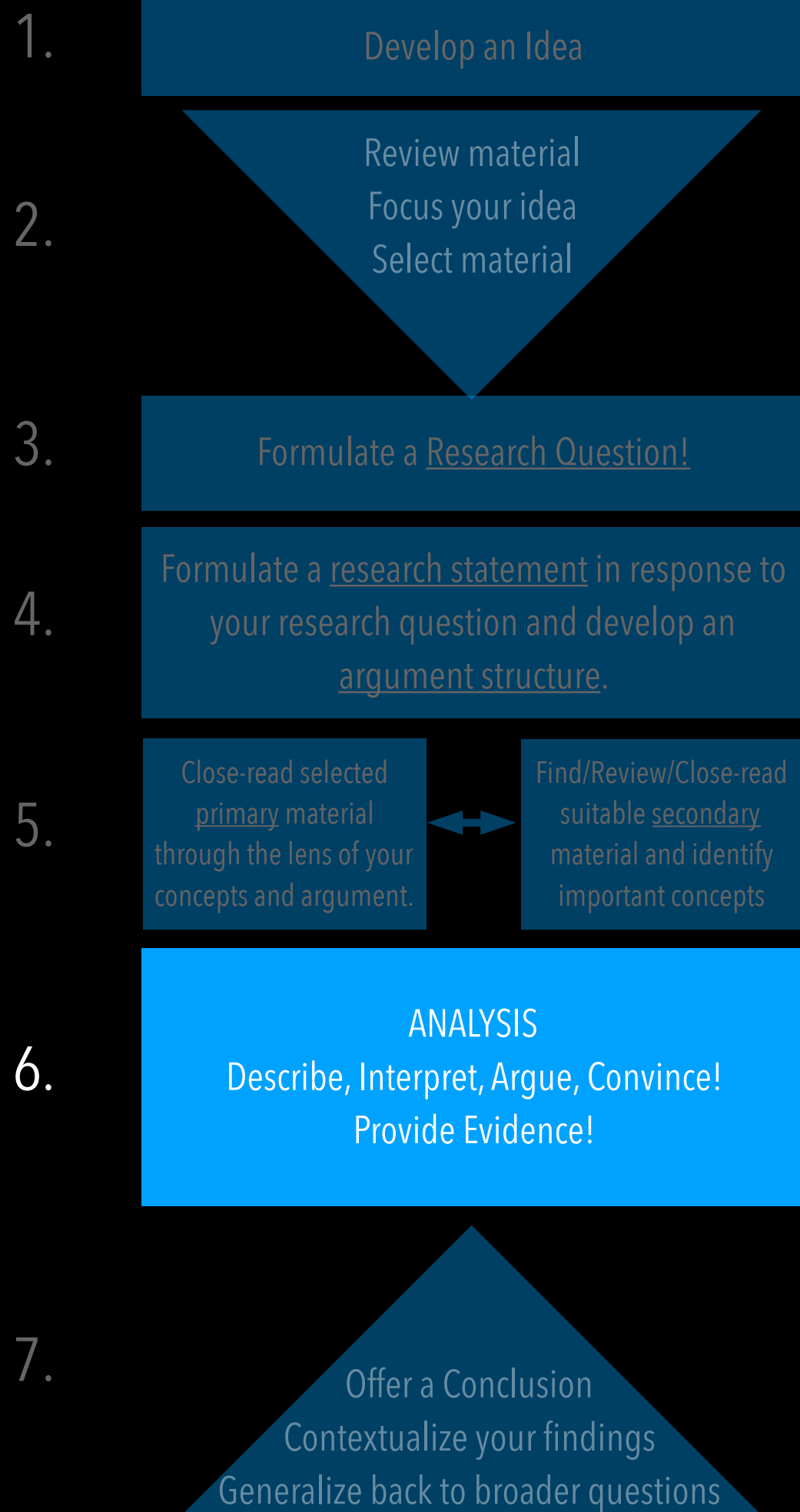
- Always anchor your argument in a careful description of your object of analysis
- Develop a systematic argument based on critical interpretation, contextualization, and explanation
- Anchor your argument in close readings (with citations) from the texts
- Bring your argument in dialogue with secondary material and critical concepts
- ARGUE, don't just claim or present!
- Use analytical and specific vocabulary.
- Convince your reader of your argument and provide evidence!
- adjust your research statement as necessary!
- Integrate and work with quotes!



6. Opinion vs. Interpretation

When writing a term paper, you may be wondering what amount of input should come from secondary literature and to what extent you may express your personal opinion. There can be no simple answer to that question in terms of percentages. What you should demonstrate in your paper (concerning academic writing) is the **ability to work with academic research and to reflect on sources critically**.

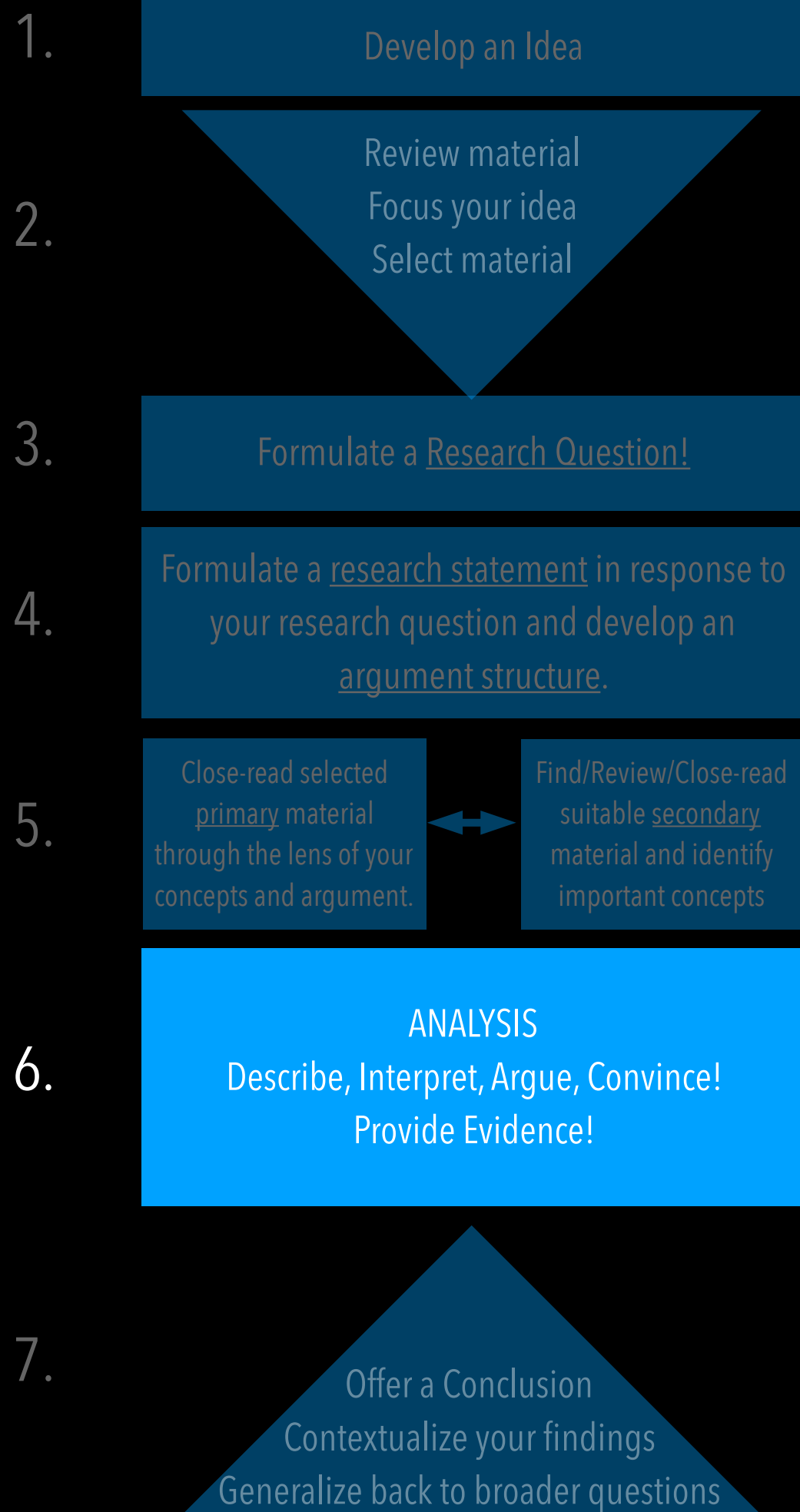
Of course, your individual take on the primary text plays a major role in your interpretation, but this should not limit your reading to a bunch of personal statements like, "In my opinion, the text is very funny." You should be particularly careful to avoid purely subjective comments (like how interesting/entertaining you found the text), though you may of course include statements on what exactly made the text fascinating or problematic. However, your evaluation of that should be linked to analytical criteria – what textual phenomena triggered your response?



6. Consider Form and Content

How does the form mirror/translate/complement content?

- narrative situation and its effects
- diction, use of images, metaphors, symbols, mood
- recurring themes and tropes
- narrative structure
- character configuration and constellation, interaction/relationships between characters
- setting
- cultural-historical context
- when using non-literary sources: composition, effect, materials, medium, colors, camera perspectives, sound, mood, etc.

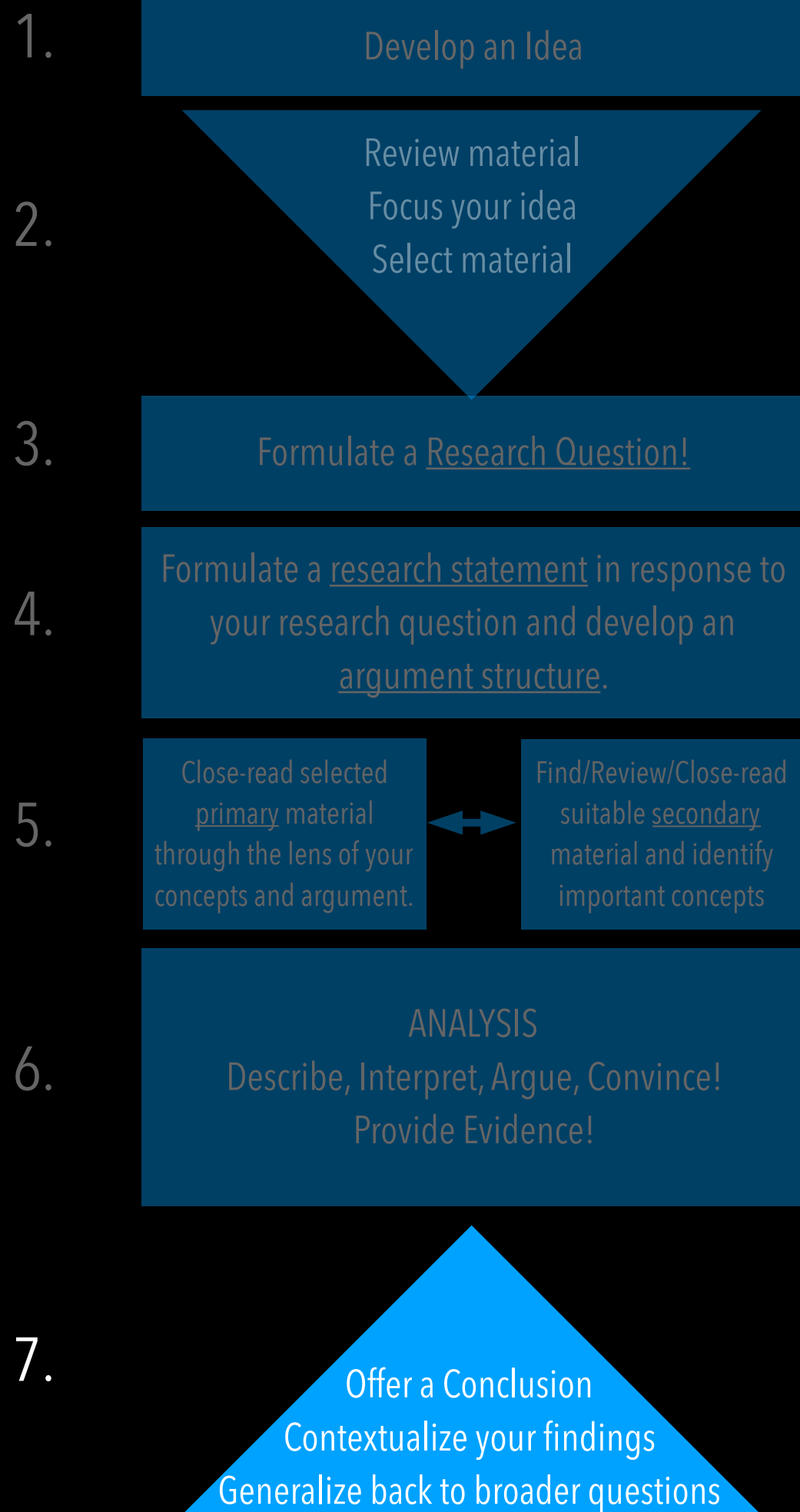


6. Working with Quotes

- Make sure to "work" with your references to other texts (pick them apart and pay attention to levels of both content and form)
- properly introduce quotes and embed them into your text and argument (don't just "dump" them into the text without comment or leave them to speak for themselves)
- Use citations creatively and constructively to advance the argument of an article.
- External sources support your argument but must not replace your argument. Do not confuse the two!
- Clearly position your argument with respect to your secondary sources. Mention the author's name in your sentences and indicate how your own argument relates to theirs.
- Contextualize the secondary quotes you are using with respect to the author's argument.

AVOID Plagiarism like the Plague! (Plagiarism will result in failure of this course)

- Treat direct quotations, indirect quotations, and paraphrases the same way. Give precise references for all quotations and cited sources.
- If you borrow someone else's words or argument, be explicit and include a reference.
- Clearly indicate the sources for all quotes. Each source cited in the text requires an appropriate in-text citation.
- Follow MLA Styleguide for all Citations and References (in-text citations and Works Cited list)
- **MLA STYLEGUIDE:** https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/mla_style/mla_style_introduction.html



7. Conclusion

- Summarize your findings and indicate the limits of their validity.
- Evaluate your findings? Why/How are they relevant?
- Which generalizations can be made from your analysis?
- How does your analysis relate to the broader context of your object of analysis?
- Circle back to the ideas you started with
- Which ambiguities, complexities, ambivalences remain?
- Do you have an outlook? What are ways forward?
- What is the useful of your argument for broader questions related to North American Culture/Literature

The Structure of your Term Paper

1.

Title Page

2.

Table of Contents

3.

Introduction

4.

Main Part

5.

Conclusion

6.

Works Cited

1.

Title Page

Title (clear and concise), Date of submission, Course title, Supervisor, Institution, Student name, Prüfungsnummer, Email Address, Matriculation Number

2.

Table of Contents

Choose chapter breakdowns that reflect your argument structure (no more than two subchapter layers); Choose good titles for your chapters that relate to your argument

3.

Introduction

Engage the readers interest!

What is your aim? What are the key questions you want to examine? What is your research statement? Why is your topic relevant? What is your material? Which critical concepts and contexts are you using? What is the structure of your argument?

(length: approx 10% of your paper)

4.

Main Part

Usually 2-4 main chapters; this is where your argument is systematically developed; provide evidence; use a sensible structure

5.

Conclusion

Evaluate and contextualize your findings

6.

Works Cited

List of all sources paraphrased, cited, or explicitly referred to. Formatted According to MLA Styleguide!

Don't's

- NO generalizations. Be very suspicious of qualifiers such as "never," "always," "all."
- AVOID moral/value judgments or personal opinion without analysis. CRITICAL DISTANCE
- NO single-sentence paragraphs. Envision your paragraphs as units of sense that systematically contribute to the development of an over-arching argument.
- Don't plagiarize!
- Avoid Redundancy

Do's

- Use SPELL- and GRAMMAR-CHECK !
- Be clear and specific in scope, content, and analysis
- State assumptions. Explain, clarify, and limit them. Explain key issues. Answer what, why, how, and when!
- Introduce and define terms!
- Be creative and build good sentences
- Link related sentences in clear paragraphs and use your paragraph in the service of your argument structure.
- "Work" with your sources and quotes.
- Embed the objects in their cultural/historical context. No object/artwork exists in a void, but rather emerges as a product of a specific time and place.
- Use analytical registers, diction, and tone (no slang, no contractions, proper sentence structure, grammar, specific terminology)
- Educate yourself! Find relevant secondary sources on the concepts and themes you want to explore

For further Support and Guidelines, see the Department Resources (on OPAL):



Fakultät Sprach-, Literatur-, und Kulturwissenschaften Institut für Anglistik und Amerikanistik

Writing a Term Paper (Hausarbeit)

The term paper is the result of a thorough investigation of a particular topic and constitutes the most extensive written assignment you will be asked to produce in a seminar. Therefore, it is important that you consider the following hints.

General hints

These are **the formal guidelines** you are **required** to follow:

- 12 point Times New Roman or 11.5 Arial
- 1.5 line spacing,
- wide enough margin for comments and corrections,
- you should indent your paragraphs,
- the paper should amount to 5-7 pages (PS Staatsexamen), 12-15 pages (**PS B.A., B.Ed.**), 15-20 pages (**HS**), 8-10 pages (**Master 5 CP**), 20-25 pages (**Master 8 CP**) – not including the title page, table of contents, bibliography, and the obligatory statement of autonomy.



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Compiling a Bibliography

The bibliography appears at the end of a research paper and consists of full bibliographic entries for the sources you have worked with. The bibliography should appear in alphabetical order with the heading **Bibliography** centered at the top of the page.

The most crucial thing about bibliographies: It is less important *which* citation style you follow (there are many different ones, like the MLA guidelines, Chicago Style, etc.). Ultimately, the decision which style to use is down to the individual lecturer, so you should always check with them what the exact formal requirements look like. However, once you have chosen to work in a particular style, you have to be *absolutely* consistent in your application of this style, using it coherently. The Institute of English and American Studies recommends the MLA citation style.