

Part 2: Upgrading Your Questioning Skills

In the Quick Start section, you learned some basic prompting methods (e.g., “Please provide me with 10 specific research angles”). However, as a university-level researcher, relying solely on broad instructions will yield formulaic, superficial responses from AI. To make AI a genuine academic assistant, you must learn to craft **academic-grade prompts**. The key lies in proactively defining boundaries for the AI, particularly by specifying the **theoretical framework** and the **corpus or archival scope**.

We strongly recommend adopting the **CREATE Prompt Framework** to achieve this.

1. What is the “CREATE” Framework?

The “CREATE” framework was proposed by AI educators Tom Barrett and Dave Birss. It is a structured questioning tool based on extensive practical experience. The framework breaks a prompt down into six key dimensions, helping you convey clearer, more specific instructions to the AI, thereby significantly improving the quality and relevance of its output. The “CREATE” framework has been included in official library guides of higher education institutions such as the University of Michigan and Cyprus University of Technology, proving its practical value in real academic settings.

The version of the CREATE framework presented here has been adapted specifically for Chinese-language research. By redefining Explanation (theoretical framework) and Archive (corpus/archival scope), it aligns with research conventions in Chinese linguistics, literature, culture, and history.

2. Detailed Explanation of the Six “CREATE” Elements (Adapted for Chinese-Language Research)

Letter	Meaning	Description	Linguistics Example (from this guide)
C	Context	Define your academic background and current objective.	“I am a linguistics student planning my final year research paper on ‘lexical borrowing from English in Hong Kong Chinese’.”
R	Request	Specify the exact deliverable required from the AI (e.g., research titles, literature outline, methodology design).	“Please generate 3 specific and operable research topics.”
E	Explanation (Theoretical Framework)	State the specific theory or analytical perspective the AI must adopt.	“Please strictly frame these 3 topics within a ‘sociolinguistic’ perspective, drawing specifically on ‘identity construction’ or ‘code-switching’ theories.”
A	Archive (Corpus/Archival Scope)	Define your research object, primary data sources, or documentary boundaries.	“Please limit the corpus scope to text data over the past three years on social media platforms widely used in Hong Kong (e.g., LIHKG or Instagram).”

T	Tone	Instruct the AI to adopt a formal, rigorous academic tone.	“Please use rigorous, professional academic language and provide a bilingual (Chinese-English) title for each topic.”
E	Extra (Additional Constraints)	Include specific constraints to format outputs or mitigate hallucinations.	“For each generated topic, please include an approximately 150-word ‘research feasibility analysis’ (including potential difficulties in corpus collection). Do not fabricate any non-existent references.”

3. Cross-Disciplinary Applicability Note

Although this guide uses a linguistics study as a primary example, the CREATE framework applies across all disciplines within Chinese studies. Simply replace the Theoretical Framework (E) and Corpus/Archival Scope (A) with concepts relevant to your field: Here are brief examples for your reference:

Discipline	Example for Theoretical Framework (E)	Example for Corpus/Archival Scope (A)
Chinese Literature	“Please analyse Du Fu’s poetry from the perspective of ‘defamiliarization’ theory.”	“The object of analysis is ‘Eight Autumn Songs’ (Qiu Xing Ba Shou).”
Chinese History	“Please analyse the late Qing reforms from the perspective of ‘modernisation theory’.”	“The historical sources are limited to the ‘Veritable Records of the Qing Dynasty’ and newspapers of that period.”
Chinese Cultural Studies	“Please use the concept of ‘lieux de mémoire’ to explore Hong Kong’s neon signboards.”	“The case study is limited to Hong Kong films from 1980 to 2000.”



Video Summary 2: Upgrading Your Questioning Skills