

**BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Guidelines for Preparation of a Research Proposal

1. Proposal Layout/Outline

Research proposals contain many, at times different or varying features dictated by the respective disciplines. The differences give them discipline peculiarities or/and specialties. However, on the whole, there are common salient features to all the disciplines. The major features are three namely;

- (I) THE PRELIMINARIES**
- (II) THE BODY OR MAIN TEXT**
- (III) THE REFERENCES**
- (IV) APPENDICES**

Each of the above has its components as follows:

I. THE PRELIMINARIES: Basically include:

- i. Title page
- ii. Declaration & Recommendation page
- iii. Abstract
- iv. Table of Contents
- v. List of Tables
- vi. List of Figures
- vii. List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

- II. THE BODY OR MAIN TEXT: Has components which mostly include the following in various sequences:

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background information
- 1.2 Statement of the problem
- 1.3 Objectives of the study
 - 1.3.1 General objective
 - 1.3.2 Specific objectives
- 1.4 Hypotheses / Research questions
- 1.5 Justification
- 1.6 Scope/Limitations/Assumptions
- 1.7 Definition of terms
- 1.8 Expected Outputs

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS & METHODS/ METHODOLOGY

WORK PLAN

BUDGET

REFERENCES

APPENDIX (where applicable)

2. Suggested Proposal Outline

The outline should be adopted and if modified to suit individual academic disciplines must be approved by the Board of Postgraduate Studies.

PRELIMINARIES

The top of the first page should bear the title of the proposal in caps.

TITLE

- (i) Should be short, precise, concise and clear
- (ii) Should relate to the subject matter of the proposal
- (iii) Should be 'captivating' or capturing the reader's attention at a glance
- (iv) The title should be followed by the author's full names

- (v) This is followed by the following citation in title case: "**A Research Proposal Submitted to the Graduate School in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the ... (Name of the degree) ... Degree in ... (Name of the Discipline).....of Egerton University**".
- (vi) Finally, Egerton University, the month and the year of presentation should be included in capital letters at the bottom of the cover page.

DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION

This page consists of declaration by the student and recommendation by the supervisor(s) accompanied by original and appropriate signatures and dates.

Declaration

In which the author candidate/student swears that the proposal is original and has not been presented before.

“This research proposal is my original work and has not been presented in this University or any other for the award of a degree”

Recommendation

This is followed by the 'Recommendation' section where the supervisor(s) declare that the proposal has been presented with their approval.

“This research proposal has been submitted with our approval as University supervisors”

ABSTRACT

Should follow the declaration/recommendation page and the word "Abstract" should be in caps, bold and centred.

- (i) The purpose of the abstract to give an interested reader a compact summary of the proposal or content.
- (ii) The abstract should be a summary, synopsis or gist of the whole work presented.
- (iii) An abstract should be a single paragraph with no quotations or references, and at most 400 words.
- (iv) If the work is not in English, the writer should provide an English translation of the abstract.
- (v) Pagination of all the above should be lowercase Roman numerals.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

- i) This page serves as a synopsis of the structure pattern of the report and should come after the abstract.
- ii) All major sections (chapter level headings) including bibliography, and appendices must be included. However, if the report is long, sub-headings may be included.
- iii) The headings as listed in the table must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the report.
- iv) The wording and presentation (i.e. capitalization, special fonts and characters etc.) used for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly that which is used in the text.

LIST OF TABLES

- i) If the proposal contains more than two (2) tables, a separate page should be devoted to the list of items giving the tables, the exact title and the page numbers where they may be found in the body of the document.
- ii) List of tables should be separated from the table of contents and should follow immediately after the table of contents.

LIST OF FIGURES

- i) This list is governed by the same rules as the list of tables and comes after the list of tables.
- ii) The figures may include graphs, photographic illustrations, plates, maps, and drawings.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS & ACRONYMS

- i) This comes after the list of figures.
- ii) All symbols, abbreviation and acronyms for scientific terms used in the document are listed on this page and their full interpretations and units given where appropriate.
- iii) Definition of terms is presented in this section for some disciplines

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background information/Background to the study

This should be brief and clear to give the reader an overview/insight of the work.

- (i) This is the scenario that culminates, provokes or creates the scholar's curiosity or urge to study the current subject.
- (ii) OR the historical development of whatever nature, scientific, sociological, economical scenario which have necessitated the study.
- (iii) A well laid down context and background brings out a sound understanding of the problem.

1.2 Statement of the problem

It is an undisputed fact that THE PROBLEM is the core or heart of any research project. If the student does not understand the problem, there are remote chances, if any, of success. Therefore,

- i) The problem must be clearly stated to stand out conspicuously and unequivocally.
- ii) Avoid preambles, wandering and irrelevancies.
- iii) To achieve a sound and acceptable statement of a problem, a single paragraph is adequate.
- iv) The statement of the problem is not a set of stated objectives.

1.3 Objectives

This section should have clear stipulated general and specific objectives.

1.3.1 General/Broad Objective/Aim

- i) This is the aim, goal or purpose of a given research.
- ii) A generic statement describing what the study intended to achieve in broad terms.
- iii) Should be closely related to the title of the research and statement of the problem.
- iv) It provides the intellectual scope of research work.

1.3.2 Specific objectives

- i) Specific objectives should be focused on the research problem in order to yield relevant data.
- ii) Should be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic & Time-bound)
- iii) They should be stated in measurable terms and in such a way that they align with the hypotheses and/or research questions.

1.4 Research questions/Hypotheses

A candidate chooses either research questions or hypotheses but not both.

- i) Like specific objectives, properly structured and implemented research questions yield useful and relevant data
- ii) The questions should, therefore, be structured to bring out the clarity and the relevance of what the researcher aims to achieve. Long and complicated questions should be avoided.
- iii) The questions should properly relate to the objectives of the study.
- iv) A hypothesis is a guiding principle to an argument that culminates into valid and reliable conclusion.
- v) The number of hypotheses is determined by the number of specific objectives the study intends to investigate.
- vi) In the pure or applied sciences, the hypothesis should be measurable and testable in the final stages.
- vii) In the social sciences where mostly the hypothesis is difficult to measure, the principle is an assumption, assertion or an issue taken for granted, hence the use of the term premise.

1.5 Justification/Significance of the Study

- i) It is indisputable that research is expensive in both money and time. One should, therefore, establish the need or relevance of the research to account for the expense.
- ii) One should justify that the findings will benefit consumers who could be individuals, groups, policy makers, scholars, among others.
- iii) Mainly, it should be shown that the findings would contribute to new knowledge.

1.6 Scope /Limitations/Assumptions

This is normally a review of the extent the research will take pegged on many issues such as area - geographical and intellectual, duration and timing, resources and research design.

- i) It therefore justifies what and why the work will be done as expressed.
- ii) It portrays the expected results under the circumstance.
- iii) It disciplines and helps to focus the research within the practicalities.

1.7 Definition of Terms

Terms which are used in the text and are not obvious should be defined or operationalized.

1.8 Expected Outputs

- i) These are expected tangible products from the planned research.
- ii) They should be aligned to the specific objectives and listed chronologically.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature review can be viewed as a selective and critical survey of the written works of the subject area. These include articles, books and unpublished papers.

- i) This is a selective and critical survey of the written works of the subject area. It includes personal communication, articles, books, published and unpublished papers (thesis only), literature from newspapers and unpublished works should be limited.
- ii) It is a critical analysis of the selected works that reveal what has already been researched on exhaustively and the missing links that need to be filled through further research.
- iii) It provides background information, which jump-starts the research exercise.
- iv) The literature review should clearly show gaps and/or directions for further research.
- v) Above all, it buttresses the researcher's statement of the problem by revealing that the area of study is untouched / identifies the gaps
- vi) Literature review should demonstrate logical flow of argument – tell a story.
- vii) References cited here must contain the name of the author(s) and year of publication
- viii) American Psychological Association (APA) referencing style is used in citation. However special consideration is given to pure and applied science disciplines where *et al.* is used for more than two authors.
- ix) *In-narrative citation*: Nyalala (2019) observed that.....According to Kitaka and Nyalala (2019)..... The results concur with Kitaka *et al.* (2019)
- x) *Parenthetical citation*: single author (Nyalala, 2019); two authors (Nyalala and Kitaka, 2019); many authors (Nyalala *et al.*, 2019).
- xi) Multiple citations should be arranged chronologically and separated by semi-colons.
- xii) Literature review is also useful in providing the theoretical framework(s) that subsequently conceptualizes the fieldwork results.

Literature review is a must, and should be exhaustive, thorough, critical, informative and current. Plagiarism MUST be avoided when reviewing literature.

Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework

It is in this section where the researcher explains the major theories that exist on tackling the problem. Both the outdated and modern theories should be discussed, revealing the merits, demerits and limitation of each.

- i) The researcher finally chooses one new or a modification of the same or modification of several as his/her model in solving the research problem.
- ii) The choice should be convincingly justified. A clear plan on how to steer the work, should be shown here.
- iii) This section is important because it relates and coordinates the literature review, the problem, the significance of the study and the objectives to the next major topics, the methodology.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS AND METHODS

This is a crucial section that determines the success or failure of the research.

- i) It is in this section that the researcher shows what processes, approaches, equipment, tools and methods his/her research will use and how one will go about doing the research, till the data generated are ready for consumption
- ii) Basically it includes: description of study location, research design, sample population, research instruments, data collection and analysis
- iii) It needs to describe accurately, chronologically, clearly and logically how the research will be designed, conducted and analysed
- iv) This section should provide detailed information necessary to repeat the research and verify the results.
- v) The section should be so well written that the reader can do the same work guided by this write-up.

WORKPLAN

- i) The work plan is simple and is useful in guiding the researcher to keep at pace with the plan of the research.
- ii) It is presented as a Gantt chart NOT a table
- iii) The work plan is presented in timed sub-topics connoting activities of the research.
- iv) It is more useful to time one by calendar months and years as opposed to blocks of periods.

BUDGET

- i) The budget is an essential component of the proposal.
- ii) It should be detailed, relevant and as realistic as possible.
- iii) The budget needs to account for the value and cost of the project.
- iv) Everything in the budget should be itemized and should include: equipment, materials, stationery, transport, subsistence, research assistants, and cost of production of the final documents.
- v) An addition of the total cost, and source of research funds should be indicated.

REFERENCES

- i) This contains the list of references cited in the text.
- ii) Listed alphabetically in terms of the author(s) using hanging format without space between references.
- iii) The names of the authors (surname and initials) should be given followed by the year in brackets. This is then followed by the title of the article/book. The Journal, volume, issue numbers and pages then follows. The Journal name should be in italics. In the case of a book, the title of the book should be in italics.
- iv) Egerton University Uses APA referencing system. Special attention should be paid to referencing of periodicals, book chapters, books, theses/dissertations, conference papers and electronic resources.

APPENDICES

- i) All material which do not fit easily, or break the flow of the mainstream of the body or text but are relevant to the work as a whole should be retained as appendices and placed at the appropriate section.
- ii) The appendices are placed after the references.
- iii) Questionnaires should appear in the appendix.

GENERAL COMMENTS

- i) Research proposal is written in English (UK).
- ii) Chapters should begin on a new page.
- iii) Within a division/chapter, the presentation of sub-sections must be continuous.
- iv) Partially filled pages of text are not acceptable, only non-textual page such as those presenting tables and illustrations.
- v) Wherever the heading of a section or subsection appears near the bottom of a page, it must be followed by at least one complete line of text, or the heading should be forced to the top of the next page.
- vi) Detailed organization of the text varies among academic disciplines. However, the formatting of the text must be consistent throughout.
- vii) The proposal should not be more than thirty (30) pages excluding the appendices.
- viii) Pages for items 1 should be numbered in Roman numerals, while the pages for item 2 onwards should be in Arabic numerals.
- ix) All page numberings should be bottom centred in same font as text.
 - a. Margins: 1.00" right; 1.00" left and 1.00" bottom.
 - b. Legends/Titles: Tables – top and Figures - bottom
 - c. Chapter headings must be x 12 font bold capitals (upper case) and centred.
 - d. Sub-section headings must be bold lower case.
 - e. All text must be in Times Roman size 12.
 - f. The spacing should be 1.5
 - g. The first line in a new paragraph must be indented 5 spaces.