

UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI
FACULTY OF ARTS
RESEARCH PROPOSALS, RESEARCH PAPERS AND
THESES AND PROJECTS: FORMAT GUIDELINES

INTRODUCTION

This outline is intended to serve as a guide to students in the writing and assessment of research proposals, research papers and theses. Research is a systematic process for generating new knowledge or for confirming existing knowledge. A farmer planting two kinds of sorghum side by side to compare yields, a biochemist sequencing the proteins of a new virus, a statistician analyzing the health impact of an intervention over space and time, a sociologist questioning villagers about their feelings towards family planning – all are doing research, whether the research instrument is a microscope, a computer, a questionnaire, or a pencil and paper. There are many ways of doing research. Even in a given discipline, research protocols may differ considerably. The format suggested below is only a guide as to what is important in compiling a research *proposal* and subsequently a research paper or a *thesis*. It is to be used flexibly both by graduate students and by the Postgraduate Studies Committee.

1. RESEARCH PROPOSAL

A research proposal is a key step in the process of obtaining knowledge. Once the knowledge is obtained, it is processed and compiled into a research paper or thesis. A research proposal states the nature of knowledge to be sought; the specific objectives to be achieved so as to obtain it; justifies the need for pursuing the lacking knowledge or for filling gaps in what is already known; and specifies the methods to be used in that effort, among others. Preceding the actual body of the proposal is front matter material, which includes the title page, table of contents (and matching text pages), date of the proposal, and name and institution of the author and an abstract. The title of the proposal should be as short as possible and should reflect the main thrust of the intended investigation. The substantive sections of a proposal are as under.

1.1 Introduction

This provides the background to the proposed research.

1.2 Statement of a Research Problem

A concise description of the nature of knowledge to be sought or of gaps in existing knowledge that needs to be filled.

1.3 The Goal and Objectives of the Study

The goal is the overall aim of the study; the objectives are the specific tasks to be carried out in order to achieve research goal. Key research questions or hypotheses may be stated in this sub-section.

1.4 Justification of Proposed Research

This includes a clear statement of policy and/or academic value of proposed research. Since research resources are scarce there is need to justify why they should be used to carry out the intended project. A research justification can also come under the introductory part in the same section as problem statement.

1.5 Scope and Limitations

The section states what will be included or excluded from the study. If the proposed study has limitations, due for instance to types of data sources that will be used, they should be stated here.

1.6 Definition of Terms

Definitions and clarifications of key or new terms to be used in the study.

1.7 Review of the Literature

This section describes how the stated or similar research problem has been approached in the past. The review should be focused (related to the topic under study) and critical (weaknesses and strengths of previous work should be indicated). The contribution of the new work to the literature should be stated.

1.8 Conceptual Framework

In this section, the research problem is analyzed in an abstract way, to provide a conceptual understanding of it before data is collected, as necessary, for further analysis of the issue. The framework guides any data collection effort and facilitates interpretation of research findings.

The literature and the relevant theory on the subject under investigation are used to build the conceptual framework.

1.9 Research Hypotheses

The hypotheses are derived from the framework and/or from the literature. They may be stated following the exposition of the analytical Framework (in the same or different sub-section).

1.10 Methodology

This section details how the research project will be carried out. The section should describe proposed study sites or sources of data and reasons for their selection; types of data to be collected; sampling methods to be used and techniques of data collection and analysis. If no data are needed other appropriate research instruments or approaches should be discussed in detail.

1.11 Expected Outcome of the Project

These are deliverables of the study. The candidate should state what kinds of information will be generated by the proposed research.

1.12 Brief Outline of the Contents of Proposed Research Paper or Thesis

The table of contents should be followed by a brief and realistic time schedule of research activities. Indications of time to be devoted to each activity, e.g., literature review (without providing the exact completion date) is sufficient.

1.13 References and Bibliography

The reference or bibliographic list follows the notes, and precedes the annexes, and should be consistently done.

1.14 Appendices and Annexes

Any appendices should be listed here and should all be referenced in the text.

1.15 Length of a Research Proposal

The suggested lengths of each substantive sub-section of a proposal are as shown in parentheses below: introduction (1-2 pages), problem statement (5-8 pages), literature review and conceptual framework (6-10 pages), methodology (2-5 pages). An overall research proposal length of 15-25 pages is recommended, exclusive of references and annexes.

II RESEARCH PAPER, PROJECT OR THESIS

A Research Paper, like a Thesis, is a scholarly piece of work prepared to fulfill a degree requirement. It differs from a Thesis mainly in formalities governing its preparation and examination. While a Thesis is normally not examined until it is prepared and bound according to *specifications* of the University, and is duly signed by the candidate and the supervisor(s), a research paper can be examined as soon as its academic requirements are fulfilled, which greatly shortens the time students wait to graduate. Otherwise a research paper satisfies the key requirements of a Thesis as to originality, academic merit, and systematic documentation of the sources and data used to prepare it. A Research Paper or Thesis is the final product of a research process. The front matter of a Research Paper or Thesis is essentially the same as that of a proposal. The substantive sections (1.1 to 1.10) of a research proposal are synthesized to form

the background to a research paper or thesis. In addition, a research paper or thesis contains two main sections: (a) data presentation, analysis, and discussion of findings; and (b) summary and conclusions.

2.1 Data Presentation and Analysis

This applies to both quantitative and qualitative data. The manner of presentation and analysis depend on the type and quality of data collected. The results should be presented and interpreted in a clear manner. Presentation follows best (state-of-the art) practice in the relevant discipline; interpretation in light of theory and literature in the area of study. The data is presented in one or more chapters.

2.2 Summary and Conclusions

The candidate may summarize the *whole* thesis, the *innovative* aspects of it (including the methodology) or its key findings. The conclusions (based only on findings of the research done) and their implications for further research and policy are discussed here.

3.3 Bibliography and References

Up to date photocopies of MLA and APA style heads for humanities and social sciences can be obtained in the main library reserve and departments.

3.4 Appendices

Any appendices normally come after the bibliography; they should all be cited or referenced in the text of a Research Paper or Thesis.

REGULATIONS FOR THE SUBMISSION OF THESIS/ PROJECT FOR HIGHER DEGREE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF NAIROBI

1. These regulations are supplementary to the university regulations for individual higher degrees; the latter, in each case provides that the thesis shall be submitted, after due notice, to the Director Board of Post Graduate Studies in quadruplicate and that, if the degree is awarded, each copy shall remain the property of the University.
2. (a) The thesis/ project must be type written or printed on good quality paper of A 4 size (210X297) mm.
(b) The type must be done double spaced and on one side of the paper only. Copies must be clear. There should be a 50mm margin on the left hand and a 25 mm margin on the right hand of the paper. Typing should begin about 40mm from the upper margin and there should be a 25 mm margin at the bottom of the page.
(c) Pages should be numbered consecutively and the number should appear just below the centre of the upper margin.
3. The front title must be arranged as follows:
Title of thesis or project in capital letters
Full name of the candidate
Then, 'A thesis/ project submitted in (part) fulfillment for the Degree of (insert name of degree) in the University of Nairobi'. This statement should appear in the middle of the page.
The year (The whole title should be symmetrically arranged)
4. The second page must contain:
(a) A signed declaration by the candidate with the following statement:
'This thesis/ project is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University'.
(b) A signed declaration by each of the supervisors with the following statement: 'This thesis has been submitted for examination with my (our) approval as (a) University supervisor/ supervisors.
5. The third page of the thesis/ project (and following if necessary) should contain a table of contents with page numbers.
6. A summary of the contents of the thesis (abstract) not exceeding a thousand (1,000) words should follow, beginning on a new page.
7. Tables, text figures, diagrams and plates should be numbered in separate sequences and should be cited by number in the text. Each table, text figure, diagram and plate should have a full caption. Text figures and diagrams should in general be reproduced by photographic or similar means. There should be a 60mm margin around all text figures, diagrams and plates, and all lettering must be in stencil or its equivalent.
8. Literature must be cited by author and date or by number in the text, and a list of references must appear at the end of the thesis/ project.
9. Four spiral bound copies of the thesis or project should be submitted and the Name, category of the work and year should be written on the spine from down upwards.
10. After the defence and award of certificate of correction, the candidate shall submit three spiral and three black hard bound copies. The spine of the thesis / project should be embossed in gold with the surname and initials of the candidate, the degree for which the thesis is being submitted, and the year. The writing should be read from the bottom to the top of the spine. The same applies to the spiral bound copies.
11. A compact Disk (CD) in PDF format should also be submitted containing the title, declaration and abstract.