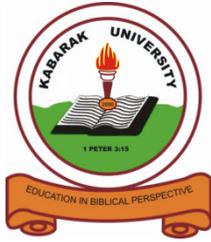# KABARAK UNIVERSITY

GUIDELINES TO PREPARING RESEARCH PROPOSAL, THESIS/PROJECT

POST GRADUATE STUDENT GUIDE

INSTITUTE OF POST GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

NOVEMBER, 2015

Contents

Guidelines for preparing a Research Proposal

Research proposals contain many, at times different or varying features dictated by the respective disciplines. The difference 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

THE PRELIMINARIES: Basically include:

1. Title page
2. Declaration page
3. Recommendation page
4. The Abstract
5. Table of contents
6. Tables figures
7. Symbols/abbreviation
8. Definition of significant terms

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

1. Introduction/context background of the problem
2. The statement of the problem
3. Objectives
4. Hypothesis or hypotheses/Premises
5. Research questions
6. Scope/limitations/assumptions
7. Justification/significance of the study
8. Literature review
9. Theoretical framework/conceptual framework
10. Methodology
11. Work plan
12. Budget
13. References
14. Appendices

CONTENT OUTLINES

Suggested content outlines which should be adopted or modified to suit individual academic disciplines

TITLE PAGE

On top should bear the title of the proposal in caps.

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 research's attention at a glace

- The title should be followed by the author's names.
- Next should be the citation 'A Research proposal submitted to the graduate school in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the ……. Name of the Certificate ….. Degree in ….. Name of the Discipline ….. of Kabarak University.
- This is followed by KABARAK UNIVERSITY just above the month and year.
- Finally the month and the year of presentation

THE DECLARATION, RECOMMENDATION, ACKNOWLEDGEMENT AND DEDICATION PAGES

In which the author candidate/student swears that the work is original and has not been presented before. This is followed by the 'Recommendation' section where the supervisor(s) declare that the work has been presented with their approval. The COD and Dean sign on the accompanying form only and not on this page. The student has the option to include the acknowledgement and dedication pages

(a)   The Abstract

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

i)   The purpose of the abstract is to give an interested reader a compact summary of the proposal r content.

ii)   The abstract should be a summary, synopsis or gist of the whole   work presented.

iii)   An abstract should be one paragraph or maximum two paragraphs, double spaced with no quotations or references, and at most 400 words.

iv)   If the work is not in English, the writer should provide and English translation of the abstract. Pagination of all the above is Roman numbers. Lowercase, numerals.

(b)   Table of Contents

- This page serves as a synopsis of the structure pattern of the report and should come after the abstract.

- All major sections (chapter level headings) including bibliography, and appendices must be included. But if the report is long, sub-heading may be included.
- The headings as listed in the table must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the report.
- The wording and presentation (i.e. capitalization, special fonts and characters etc) use for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly that which is used in the text.

(c)   List of Tables
- If the proposal contains a lot of table, a separate page should be devoted to the list of items giving the tables, the exact title and the page numbers where it may be found in the body of the report.
- List of tables should be separated from the table of contents and should follow immediately after the table of contents.
- All entries must contain a corresponding page number with leader dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

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

(e) List of symbols/Abbreviations/Definitions
- These come after the list of figures
- All symbols and abbreviation for scientific terms used in the report are listed on this page and their full interpretations given and the units where appropriate.

(F) Definition of Terms
- Terms which are used in the text and are not obvious should be defined.

1.   INTRODUCTION/CONTEXT OF BACKGROUND TO THE PROBLEM
- This should be brief and clear to give the reader an overview/insight of the work.
- This is either the scenario that culminates in including, provoking or provoking or creating the scholar's curiosity or urge to study the current subject.
- Or the historical development of whether nature, scientific, sociological, economical etc. which have necessitated the study.
- A well laid down context of, background to, the problem, brings about a sound understanding of the problem or rather exposes the same.
- An exercise of discipline is required to keep the introduction and context of background to the problem separate. However, depending of the nature of the problem, it is acceptable to mix under one of the above sub-titles, usually introduction.

2. **THE 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 only remote chances, if any, of success. When adequately understood as portrayed through the statement, achieving is easy, less expensive and actually enjoyable. Therefore,
   - The problem must be clearly stated to stand out conspicuously, unequivocally and sharply.
   - Avoid preambles, wandering and irrelevancies.
   - To achieve a sound and acceptable statement of a problem, one does not need two or three paragraphs. One paragraph, even a sentence or two in most cases are enough.
   - The statement of the problem is not a set of stated objectives.

3. **OBJECTIVES**
   - Objectives of a research are like aims and goal of the research. Some researchers may have long and long term objective/general and specific objectives.
   - Appropriate objectives enable the elucidation of and focusing on, the date that helps in the solving of the research problem.
   - Objectives also provide the intellectual scope of a proposal or research work.
   - Consequently, the objectives should be stated unequivocally and as activities whose results will solve the problem(s).

4. **HYPOTHESIS OR HYPOTHESES/PREMISE/ASSUMPTIONS**
   - A hypothesis is basically a guiding principle to an argument that leads to a final proved or established conclusion. The hypothesis should be testable.
   - In the social sciences where mostly the hypothesis is difficult to measure, the principle is an assumption, or an issue taken for granted. Hence the use of the names assumption, premise and hypothesis.
   - A proposal could have one or more premises/hypotheses.
   - One common quality of the premises, especially in the social science, is that the principles can be confirmed true or disapproved.
   - The premise is not a must especially in the social sciences, it that the principles can be confirmed true or disapproved.
   - The premise is not a must especially in the social sciences where it can be replaced by other facets of the proposal such as hypothesis.

5. **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**
   - Like objectives, research questions are very useful in eliciting the required data if properly structured and implemented.
   - The question should, therefore, be structured to bring clarity of what the question requires as well as the focus on the relevance. Long and complicated questions do not achieve much. The questions should be related to the objectives.

- It is not necessary to have research questions and hypotheses since both are related to the objectives. Thus the author needs to choose either hypotheses or research questions.

6. JUSTIFICATION/SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY
- 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.
- One should justify that the findings will benefit consumers who could be individuals , groups, policy makers, scholars, etc.
- Mainly, it should be shown that the findings would contribute to new knowledge.

7. 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.
- Literature review should include current research works.
- The review should be a critical analysis of the selected works to reveal the done and the untouched, therefore revealing the gaps that require filling.
- The review provides aspects of background information which jump-starts the research, reveals the works to readers.
- The review is useful in providing the theoretical frameworks(s) and finally used to bring out about the pursued results.
- The review, above all, buttresses the researcher's statement of the problem by revealing that the subject of the proposal is untouched or not done as proposed.
- The review is therefore, a must, and should be exhaustive, thorough, critical and informative.
- The review should clearly show gaps and/or directions for further research.
- References cited here must contain the name or names (at most two, otherwise use at al.) and the year in brackets.

8. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
- It is in this section where the researcher explains the major theories that exist on tackling the problem. Both the out-dated and modern theories should be discussed, revealing the merits, demerits and limitation of each.
- 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.
- The choice should be convincingly justified. A clear plan on how to steer the work, should be shown here.
- 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.

9. SCOPE/LIMITATIONS/ASSUMPTIONS

- This is normally a review of the extent the research will take pegged on many issued such as areas geographical and intellectual, duration and timing, resources and research design.
- It therefore justifies what and why the work will be done as expressed.
- It portrays the expected results under the circumstance.
- It disciplines and helps to focus the research within the practicability.

10. METHODOLOGY

- This is a section where the results bring either the failure or achievement.
- This section is commonly called methodology, methods of study or materials and methods depending on the discipline.
- It is here where the researcher describes as fully as possible and procedure to be used in eliciting date throughout the work to the final stage which includes analyzing the data and compiling the same for the consumer.
- Different types of researches in both the same and different disciplines demand specific tools and methods to succeed. It is in this section that the researcher shows what his/her particular research will use and how one will go about doing the search, till the data is ready for consumption.
- The section should be so well written that the reader do the same work guided by the write-up.
- Study area (in some disciplines should show scope, locations and population).

11. WORK PLAN

- The work plan is simple and is useful in guiding the research to keep at peace with the plan of the research.
- The work plan is presented in timed sub-topics connoting activities of the research.
- It is more useful to time one by calendar months and years as opposed to blocks of periods to consume a period of years.
- The work plan should come after methodology.

12. BUDGET

- The budget is an essential component of the proposal. Is should be as detailed as is relevant and should account for the value and cost of the project. Beas realistic as possible.
- Everything in the budget should be itemized. The item will include stationery, transport, subsistence, research assistants, and cost of production of the final documents to incidentals.
- An addition of the total cost, usually 10% in acceptation to cater for fluctuations.
- A budget should come after the work plan and before references.

13. REFERENCES

- This contains the list of references cited in the text as well as other relevant references.
- The list should be in alphabetical order in terms of the author(s) and years.

- 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, pages should then follow. The journal name should be in italics. In the case of a book, the title of the book should be in italics.

- Use APA (American Psychological Association) Format for the entire proposal, especially the references in the text and the bibliography.

14. APPENDICES
- 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.
- The appendices are placed after the bibliography.
- Questionnaires should appear in the appendix.

15. GENERAL COMMENTS
- Only major division or chapters should begin with a new page.
- Within a chapter, the presentation of sub-sections must be continuous.
- Partially filled pages of text are not acceptable, only non-textual page such as those presenting tables and illustrations.
- 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 or text, or the heading should be forced to the top of the next page.
- Detailed organization of the test varies among academic disciplines. However, the formatting of the text must be consistent throughout.
- The proposal should not be more than thirty (30) pages excluding the appendices.
- Pages for items 2 and 3 should be numbered in roman numerals, while the pages for item 4 onwards should be in Arabic numerals.
- All page numbering should be bottom centre in same font as text.

- Be sure to define ALL significant terms

- Be sure to proof read your proposal AT LEAST twice before you submit it to your advisor.

- Look at examples of thesis in your field at the library to see how they are structured and what information needs to be included.

Guidelines for Preparing Research Theses

Research theses contain different feature dictated by their mother disciplines. The differences give them discipline peculiarities. However, there are common salient features across all academic disciplines. These include:-

- The preliminaries
- The main text
- The references
- Appendices

Each of these has its unique components viz.

I. THE PRELIMINARIES
These preliminaries include:

- The cover – back in color no writing except on spine.
- Spine – candidates surname and initial, the abbreviation for the degree. Writings from top of spine to bottom.
- Pagination: bottom centre
- Margins: 1.00" left and 1.00" right and 1.00" bottom.
- Maximum 300 pages.
- List of candidate's publications (options): to appear as an appendix
- Legends/Titles; tables – top   figures - bottom
- Chapter headings must be X 12 font bold capitals (upper case) and centered.
- Sub-section headings must be bold lower case.
- All text must be in Times Roman size 12
- The spacing should be DOUBLE
- The first line in a new paragraph must be indented 5 spaces or separation of paragraph by a blank line

II. Roman Page order
- The title page
- The declaration page
- Recommendation page
- Copy right – page
- Acknowledgement page (optional)
- Dedication page (optional)
- The abstract
- Table of contents
- Tables figures
- Symbols/abbreviation

- Definition of significant terms/Operational definition of terms

III. THE MAIN TEXT
The MAIN text is composed of:

Chapter 1

Introduction

- The background and the problem
- The statement of the problem
- The objectives
- The hypotheses/premise/research questions
- The justification/significance of the study
- The scope and limitations

Chapter 2

- The literature review
- The theoretical framework/Conceptual framework

Chapter 3

- The methodology

Chapter 4

- Results
- Discussion

Chapter 5 and 6

- Conclusion and recommendations
- References
- Appendices (optional)

IV. THE BIBLIOGRAPHY
Referencing format: APA Referencing Manual Current Edition ; Titles of paper should be provided. References consist of cited quotes only.

V. THE APPENDICES
This consists of questionnaires, transcriptions and list of candidate's relevant publications. It also contains analysis details and relevant raw data.

VI.   SUGGESTED OUTLINE

1. Title page
- This should bear the tile of the thesis in capital letters followed below by the full names of the students.
- The title should be short, precise, concise and clear. It should relate to the subject matter of the thesis. It should also be captivating.
- Name of candidate
- This is followed by the following: " A thesis submitted to the Graduate School in partial fulfillment for the requirements of the … (Name of the degree) … Degree in … (Name of the Discipline) … of "Kabarak University" should follow the title.
- Finally, the month and the year of presentation should be included (See Appendix 1).

2. The declaration page
On this page, the candidate should swear that the work is original and has not been presented for the award of any other degree elsewhere (See Appendix 2).

3. Recommendation Page
This page is the supervisor(s) declaration that the work has been presented with their approval (See Appendix 3).

4. Copyright Page

5. Acknowledgement page (Optional)

6. Dedication page (optional)

7. The abstract
- Language: English
- 300 words
- One paragraph and should consist of:
  - Background to the problem
  - Justification
  - Objectives
  - Methods
  - Results
  - Conclusion
  - Recommendation
- Pagination of all the above should be in lower case Roman numerals.

8.   Table of Contents
- This is a synopsis of the structural pattern of the thesis
- It contains all major sections i.e. chapter level headings. If the report is long, sub-headings may be included.
- The headings as listed in the table must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the report.

- The wording and presentation (i.e. capitalization, use of special fonts and characters etc) for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly with the text.
- All entries must have a corresponding page number with leader dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

9. **List of Tables**
   - If the thesis contains a lot of tables, a separate page should be devoted to the list of tables specifying the title and the page where tables can be found in the thesis
   - The list of tables should be separate from the table of contents and should come immediately after the table of contents.
   - All entries must contain a corresponding page number with lead dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

10. **List of Figures**
    - The lists are governed by the same rules as the list of tables.
    - Figures include graphs, photographic illustrations, maps and drawings.

11. **List of Symbols/Abbreviations/Operational Definition of terms**
    - All symbols, abbreviations and technical terms in the thesis should be listed on this page and their full interpretations, and the units where appropriate given.

12. **Introduction**
    - The introduction of the thesis should be brief and clear.
    - It should give the reader an insight into the whole work, thereby acting as a summary of the same.
    - It comes before the literature review and hence exposes views of other authorities in the subject. In a nutshell, it portrays the relevant aspects of the thesis such as the problem and significance of the study.

12. **Background to the study**
    - This is what culminates into the scholar's curiosity to the study the subject
    - A well-laid down context of the background to the study brings up a sound understanding of the topic of research.

13. **The statement of the problem**
    - This is the nerve-centre of any research work. It should be adequately comprehended by the researcher at the onset.
    - The problem must be clearly and conspicuous stated in just one paragraph
    - It should be clearly focused, without unnecessary preambles and ambiguity

14. **Justification of the study**
    - Research being expensive both in terms of money and time, it is imperative that its relevance is established at the onset in order to save the researcher unnecessary expenses.
    - One should prove that the research findings would be beneficial to the targeted stakeholders besides making a contribution to the existing knowledge.

15. **Objectives**
    - These are the aims and goals of a given research. They provide the intellectual scope of research work.
    - Objectives should be focused on the research problem in order to yield relevant data
    - They should be stated in such a way that they align with the hypotheses and research questions.

16. **Hypotheses**
    - A hypothesis is a guiding principle to an argument that culminates into valid and reliable conclusion.
    - In the physical sciences, the hypothesis should be measurable in the final stages.
    - Conversely, in the social sciences the hypothesis is difficult to measure; hence it remains a principle of assumption subject to confirmation through research.

17. **Research Questions**
    - Like objectives, properly structured and implemented research questions yield useful and relevant data.
    - 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.
    - The questions should properly relate to the hypotheses or objectives of the study.
    - A candidate chooses either hypothesis or research questions guided by the objectives of the study.

18. **Theoretical Framework/Conceptual Framework (Optional)**
    - This contains theories that exist on tackling a given research problem.
    - In establishing a suitable theoretical framework, the researcher should consider both outdated and modern theories; reveal the merits, demerits and limitations of each.
    - The researcher should then choose either one whole already established framework, or a modification of one or several frameworks for solving the research problem at hand.
    - The choice of the framework should be convincingly justified. A clear mental plan or contemplation on how to steer the work and should be shown here.
    - This section is important because it relates and co-ordinates the literature review, the problem, the significance of the study and the objectives to the applied methodology.

19. **Assumptions (Optional)**

20. **Scope and Limitations**
    - This is a review of the extent the research has taken. It is pegged on the geographical and intellectual area of study, the time taken, the resources used and the research design.
    - It justifies what, when and why the work was done as expressed.
    - It portrays the established results under the given circumstances.

21. **Literature review**
    - This is selective and critical survey of the written works in the subject area. It includes personal communication, articles, and books, published and unpublished papers (thesis only). Literature from newspapers and unpublished works to be limited.

- It is critical analysis of the selected works that reveals what has already been researched on exhaustively and the missing links that need to be filled through further research.
- It provides background information, which jump-starts the research exercise.
- It is useful in providing the theoretical frameworks(s) that subsequently conceptualize the fieldwork results.
- Above all, it buttresses the researcher's statement of the problem by revealing that the area of study is untouched.
- Literature review is, therefore, a must, and should be exhaustive, thorough, critical, informative, and current.

22. **Methodology/Materials and Methods**
- This is the procedure used in eliciting data from the field of study. It includes data analysis and compilation.
- Research design, sample population, research instruments, data analysis
- Also includes description of the study location.
- This section should be well written in order to justify the validity and reliability of the study.

23. **Appendices**
- All materials, which do not easily fit into the mainstream of the thesis write-up but are relevant to the work as a whole, should be retained as appendices either after the bibliography.

24. **Chapter Layout**
- All chapters should begin with a new page.
- Within a chapter, the presentation of sub-sections must be continuous.
- Partially filled textual pages are acceptable only if followed by non-textual pages such as those presenting tables and illustrations.
- Whenever the heading of a section or sub-section 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.
- Detailed organization of the text varies among academic disciplines. However, the formatting of the text must be consistent throughout.

25. **General Format**
- The text should be in Times Roman Size 12 and the spacing should be 2.0 (double)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: COVER PAGE

STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS WEB-BASED LEARNING RESOURCES

Grace Masai

A Research Project presented to Institute of Postgraduate Studies and Research, Kabarak University, in Partial Fulfillment for the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education (Counseling Psychology)

KABARAK UNIVERSITY

SEPTEMBER, 2011

APPENDIX 2:   DECLARATION PAGE

Declaration

The research project is my own original work and to the best of my knowledge it has not been presented for the award of a degree in any other university

Student Name   _____

Student Signature _____

Admission No: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 3:   RECOMMENDATION PAGE

To the Institute of Postgraduate Studies:

The project entitled "Students' Attitudes Towards Web-Based Learning Resources" and written by Grace Masai is presented to the Institute of Postgraduate Studies of Kabarak University. We have reviewed the research project and recommend it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of **Master of Business Administration.**

_____

Dr. Lily Njanja

_____

Dr. Charles Zakayo

October 10, 2011