

# PROPOSAL WRITING GUIDELINES

## INTRODUCTION

The purpose of writing a research proposal is to demonstrate that

- ✓ the research topic addresses a significant problem;
- ✓ an organized plan is in place for collecting or obtaining data to help solve the problem;
- ✓ methods of data collection and analysis have been identified and are appropriate to the data set.

A secondary purpose of writing a proposal is to train you in the art of proposal writing as these skills will be useful not only in the world of academia but in all fields.

## STRUCTURE OF A RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Your research proposal should have the following elements in this order.

1. Title page
2. Declaration
3. Abstract
4. Table of contents
5. Main text
6. Expected output and beneficiaries
7. Work plan including time frame
8. References
9. Appendices (optional)

The structure is very similar to that of a thesis or a scientific paper. You will therefore be able to use a large fraction of the material of the proposal in your final thesis.

## 1.0 THE PRELIMINARIES

### 1.1 General format

- 1.1.1 The text should be in Times Roman Size 12 double spaced.
- 1.1.2 The first line in a new paragraph must be indented five spaces.
- 1.1.3 All chapters should begin in a new page and centered.
- 1.1.4 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.

### 1.2 Title Page

- 1.2.1 This should bear the title of the proposal in capital letters. The title should be short, precise, concise and clear (not more than twenty words). It should relate to the subject matter of the proposal. It should be captivating.
- 1.2.2 This should be followed below by the full name of the student, the highest degree title in parenthesis
- 1.2.3 This is followed by a statement as follows “**A research proposal submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of (name of the degree) in (area of specialization), Kenyatta University**” in the middle of the page.
- 1.2.4 Finally, the month and the year of submission at the bottom and centred.

### **1.3 Declaration**

- 1.3.1 A signed declaration by the candidate with the following statement” **This proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other university**” Followed below it by the full of student, signature and date
- 1.3.2 This is followed by a declaration by the supervisors as follows: Supervisors Approval followed with a statement below it as follows; **This proposal has been submitted with our approval as the university supervisors**
- 1.3.3 This is followed by the supervisors names (at least two full names), their departments, institutional affiliation, signature and date

### **1.4 Table of Contents**

- 1.4.1 This is a synopsis of the structural pattern of the proposal.
- 1.4.2 It contains all major sections i.e. chapter level headings. If the proposal 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.
- 1.4.3 If long, sub-headings may be included.
- 1.4.4 The wording and presentation (i.e. capitalisation, use of special fonts and characters e.t.c.) for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly with the text.
- 1.4.5 All entries must have a corresponding page number with leader dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

### **1.5 Abstract**

- 1.5.1 The abstract is a brief summary of your research proposal
- 1.5.2 Its length should not exceed one page and at most two paragraphs
- 1.5.3 Present a brief introduction to the research problem
- 1.5.4 Make the key statement of your hypothesis
- 1.5.5 Give a summary of how you want to address the issue
- 1.5.6 Include a possible implication of your work, if successfully completed

## **2.0 THE MAIN TEXT**

The main text is composed of:

### **2.1 Chapter 1**

- i. The introduction.
- ii. The background to the problem
- iii. The statement of the problem
- iv. The justification/significance of the study
- v. The hypothesis research questions
- vi. The objectives
- vii. Theoretical and Conceptual framework

#### **2.1.1 Introduction**

- 2.1.1.1 The introduction of the proposal should be brief and clear
- 2.1.1.2 It should give the reader an insight into the work, thereby acting as a summary of the same.
- 2.1.1.3 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 proposal such as the problem and significance of the study.

## **2.1.2 Background to the Study**

2.1.2.1 This is what culminates into the scholar's curiosity to study the subject.

2.1.2.2 A well laid down context of the background to the study brings up a sound understating of the topic of research.

## **2.1.3 Statement of the Problem**

2.1.3.1 This is the nerve - centre of any research work, which should be adequately comprehended by the researcher at the onset.

2.1.3.2 The problem must be clearly and conspicuously stated in just one paragraph.

2.1.3.3 It should be clearly focused without unnecessary preambles and ambiguity.

## **2.1.4 Justification/Significance of the Study**

2.1.4.1 It is imperative that the relevance of the research be established at the onset

2.1.4.2 One should prove that the research findings would be beneficial to the targeted consumers besides making a contribution to the existing knowledge.

## **2.1.5 Hypotheses/Research questions**

2.1.5.1 A hypothesis is a guiding principle to an argument that culminates into a valid and reliable conclusion. This should be measurable in the final stages

2.1.5.2 This statement can take the form of a hypothesis, research question, project statement, or goal statement

2.1.5.3 Properly structured and implemented research questions yield useful and relevant data.

2.1.5.4 The statement should capture the essence of your intended project, being structured to bring out the clarity and the relevance of what the researcher aims to achieve.

2.1.5.5 The questions should properly relate to the objectives of the study.

## **2.1.6 Objectives**

2.1.6.1 They provide intellectual scope of research work. They can be divided into General and specific objectives where the general objective gives the general aim/goal of the research project

2.1.6.2 The specific objectives should be focused on the research problem in order to yield relevant data.

2.1.6.3 They should be "SMART" objectives

2.1.6.4 They should be stated in such a way that they align with the research questions.

## **2.1.7 Theoretical and Conceptual framework**

2.1.7.1 This contains theories that exist on tackling a given research problem

2.1.7.2 In establishing a suitable theoretical framework, the researcher should consider both outdated and modern theories; reveal the merits, demerits and limitations of each.

2.1.7.3 The choice of the framework should be convincingly justified. A clear mental plan or contemplation on how to steer the work should be shown here.

2.1.7.4 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.

## **2.2 Chapter 2**

### **2.2.1 Literature Review**

2.2.1.1 This comprises of a selective and critical survey of the written works of the subject area. It includes personal communication, articles, books, published and unpublished papers, literature from newspaper and unpublished works to be limited.

- 2.2.1.2 It is a 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.
- 2.2.1.3 It provides background information, which justify the research exercise
- 2.2.1.4 It is useful in providing, theoretical framework(s) that subsequently conceptualise the fieldwork results
- 2.2.1.5 Above all, it buttresses the researcher's statement of the problem by revealing that the area of study is untouched.
- 2.2.1.6 Literature review is therefore a must and should be exhaustive through critical and informative and current.

## **2.3 Chapter 3**

### **2.3.1 Materials and Methods**

- 2.3.1.1 This is the procedure used in eliciting the data from the field of study. It includes data analysis and compilation.
- 2.3.1.2 Research design, sample population, and research instruments.
- 2.3.1.3 Also includes description of the study location.
- 2.3.1.4 This section should be well written in order to justify the validity and reliability of the study.

### **2.3.2 Expected outputs and beneficiaries**

- 2.3.2.1 What new knowledge will the proposed project produce that we do not already know? Why is it worth knowing?
- 2.3.2.2 What are the major implications?
- 2.3.2.3 Who are the beneficiaries of your findings

### **2.3.3 Work plan including time table**

- 2.3.3.1 Describe in detail what you plan to do until completion of your thesis
- 2.3.3.2 List the stages of your project in a table format
- 2.3.3.3 Indicate deadlines you have set for completing each stage of the project.
- 2.3.3.4 Discuss any particular challenges that need to be overcome

## **3. REFERENCES**

- 3.1 Whenever you use **someone else's words or ideas** in your paper or presentation, you must indicate that this information is borrowed by citing your source. This applies to written sources you've used, such as books, articles and web pages, as well as other formats, such as images, sounds, TV/film clips, and DVDs.
- 3.2 There are different in-text citation and referencing styles with the American Psychological Association (APA) and the Modern Language Association (MLA) being the major ones.
- 3.3 In SAED we recommend the MLA Style. The details can be obtained from **the MLA Style Manual and Guide to Scholarly Publishing**, third edition. Published: 2008 ISBN: 9780873522977 (hardcover), ISBN: 9780873522984 (large-print)
- 3.4 Cite all ideas, concepts, text, data, illustrations that are not your own in the text
- 3.5 All references cited in the text must be listed in the references

## **4. APPENDICES**

All materials, which do not easily fit into the mainstream of the proposal write – up but are relevant to the work, as a whole should be retained as appendices either after the reference list.