

**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

**SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES**

**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ACADEMIC  
RESEARCH PROPOSALS AND THESES IN THE SCHOOL OF  
APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES OF KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**

**PREPARED BY THE SCHOOL BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE  
STUDIES**

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## **PREAMBLE**

This working document is a general guide for students to write research proposals, projects and theses. The document will also help supervisors in guiding postgraduate students in matters relating to research preparation, thesis production and project work. In addition, the document explains ways of maintaining quality supervision among postgraduate students and their supervisors. It also highlights on how students registered for Graduate Courses in this school can complete their courses within the stipulated time. This is only possible if the students and supervisors work hard and in an enabling environment. How this environment can be obtained has been described and explained in the document.

## **1.0 GENERAL INFORMATION AND UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS AND THESES IN THE SCHOOL OF APPLIED HUMAN SCIENCES.**

### **Supervision**

Every department shall identify and allocate supervisors for its postgraduate students. In principle, every student will have a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 supervisors, depending on need. One of the supervisors shall be from the department or School where the student is registered.

A supervisor may be drawn from outside the department, School or even the University, in which case, the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) must certify that he or she is competent in the candidate's area of study upon submission of certified curriculum vitae by the supervisor. On-line supervision may also be used.

### **Responsibilities of Supervisors**

As principal resource persons to the students, supervisors shall:

- Be available for consultation at least once per month.
- Give feedback to their students within 2 weeks.
- Guide students to relevant literature and their sources.
- Link students to researchers working in related fields.
- Discuss and critically evaluate the candidate's findings and ideas.
- Advise candidates on the form and structure of thesis/proposal.
- Train candidates in the conventions of scholarly presentations.
- Advise students on rules governing their specific degrees.
- Enhance the quality of a student's work.
- Ensure that written report on the progress of a student's studies are submitted as required by University regulations.
- Ensure that a student presents at seminars at appropriate levels as required by the University regulations.

In the absence of a supervisor for supervision for a substantially long time, arrangements must be made by the Chairman of Department to ensure continuity in supervision by identifying a suitable replacement.

By placing his/her signature on the declaration page of the thesis, a supervisor will certify that the thesis represents the work of the candidate that was carried out under his/her supervision and is ready for official examination.



- E.g. 1. Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prof. Edith Andati  
 X Department  
 Kenyatta University (State Institution of the Supervisor)
2. Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prof. Caroline Nyakoa A.  
 Y Department  
 Moi University (as the case may apply)
3. For PhD supervisors Caroline Nyakoa A (PhD)  
 Y Department  
 University

**(c) Table of contents.**

The table of contents should capture the main titles and subtitles (Up to three levels) in the text (proposal/thesis), **and should be 1.5 spaced.**

The table of Contents, List of Tables, and List of Figures need to be computer generated and listed sequentially.

**(d) Abbreviations and Acronyms**

This section should be included in the proposal. Abbreviations and acronyms need to be given because they may be found in the proposal.

**(e) Operational Definitions of Terms**

This should come immediately after the abbreviations and acronyms

**(f) Abstract**

All proposals must have an abstract **of not more than 500 words** should be single-spaced and not paragraphed. The abstract should consist of precise spectrum of the entire proposal including the problem, objectives and methods of Data Analysis. It should give an overview of the proposal. The abstract follows **Operational Definition of Terms and** start on a new page.

**3.0 FORMAT OF MAIN BODY OF PROPOSAL**

Each major section e.g. **INTRODUCTION** should start on a separate page.

## CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Background to the study (introduces subject area under study and current situation).
- 1.2 Problem Statement (to be precise and focused)
- 1.3 Purpose of the study
- 1.4 Objectives of Study (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time bound)
- 1.5 Research Questions and or hypotheses.
- 1.6 Significance (to explain the benefits and the beneficiaries of the findings of the study).
- 1.7 Delimitations/Scope of the study (Gives the extent to which the study will be carried out).
- 1.8 Limitation (Anticipated shortcomings).
- 1.9 Assumptions (if necessary).
- 1.10 **Conceptual and/Theoretical Framework.**

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

**Items in this section must be serialized from 2.1 onwards.**

In this section of Literature Review, **candidates** should demonstrate evidence of understanding of current research on the subject under investigation and show clear gaps in knowledge that will be discussed. Appropriate themes for this chapter can be developed using the specific objectives of the study. Thus, relevant themes to the study and those derived from related literature including the theoretical framework guiding the study should be discussed here. The literature review should have a summary of identified gaps in the reviewed literature. Unless for archival studies, 80% of the references used should be less than five years old. Endeavour to use current refereed journals and periodicals as much as possible.

## CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

This Chapter highlights methodological details appropriate to the study. They include:

- 3.1 Research Design (State and justify the chosen design)
- 3.2 **Measurement of variables (explain the independent and dependent variables) and how they will be measured.**
- 3.3 Study Area (State where the study will be done (location) and why it was chosen).
- 3.4 Target Population (Describe the target population and give figures and a source).  
**Where applicable include;**
  - 3.4.1 **Exclusion criteria**
  - 3.4.2 **Inclusion criteria**
- 3.5 Sampling Techniques (Explain the Sampling techniques used for the study)
- 3.6 Sample size (explain the sample size - (unit of analysis) and explain how it will be determined).

- 3.7 Research Instruments (Justify the choice of instruments that will be used in the study and how they will be constructed and what they are meant to achieve).
- 3.8 Pre Testing – Use relevant statistics techniques to conduct pretesting
- 3.9 Validity and Reliability (explain how the validity and reliability of the instruments will be established). N.B. If using standardized test, quote test and existing validity and reliability levels.
- 3.10 Data collection Techniques (Explain how field data collection will be done)
- 3.11 Data Analysis **and Presentation** (researcher should explain and justify the analytical framework and also the anticipated findings).
- 3.12 Logistical and Ethical Considerations
- 3.13 Measurement of variables (explain the independent and dependent variables and how they will be measured).

## REFERENCES

Reference should be alphabetically listed. For citation within the text the format of author and year of publication is recommended. Use latest American Psychology Association (APA) style of referencing. **Website citations should indicate dates when accessed within the text.**

## APPENDICES

Will include such items as Questionnaires, Maps, budget and work plan. These must be **arranged alphabetically e.g. Appendix A.**

## 4.0. PROPOSAL PRESENTATION DETAILS

### (a) Typing

- 4.1 Typing: All proposals in the School should be typed in font 12 (Times New Roman) on A4 size paper, double- spaced, and on one side of the page; **except cover page, Table of contents and Abstract.**
- 4.2 Page *margins*: page margins will be as follows: left 40 mm (1.5 inches) and all other sides 25 mm (1 inch);
- 4.3 **Page numbering**: e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc should be top center and start on the INTRODUCTION page. All preceding pages except cover page should have Roman Numbering system (i.e. i, ii, iii, etc). From Title Page to **abstract** page, the numbering will be in Roman lower case (i, ii etc) in a sequential manner.

4.4 **Page numbers:** The proposal should not exceed 20 pages for a Masters and 30 pages for a PhD excluding references and appendices and; introductory pages.

4.5 **Table Numbering:** Tables will be done sequentially according to Chapters e.g. Table 1.1 in chapter One, Table 2.1 first table in Chapter Two etc. Table titles should be at the top.

4.6 **Figure Numbering:** Numbering of figures will be done sequentially according to Chapters e.g. figure 1.1 in Chapter one, figure 2.1 for the first figure in Chapter Two. The titles and sources (where applicable) should be at the bottom of the figure.

**(b) Oral Presentation**

The recommended mode of oral presentation is the POWER POINT, overhead projector or any other method agreed by the Board. The Dean's office will be requested to facilitate such presentation in the School's Boardroom/Lounge.

**(c) Tense**

Future tense should be used in writing proposals, but this must be changed to past tense when writing thesis.

**5.0 SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL TO SAHS – BPS**

Three spiral bound copies, duly signed by the student and all supervisors and accompanied by departmental minutes certifying that appropriate seminars were held, will be handed to SAHS – BPS by the departmental representative to the board. No proposal will be handled if not accompanied by the respective departmental representative, with a nil fee balance statement. Defense of proposals must be handed in 3 weeks prior notice to handing in the signed proposal to the departmental coordinator and at least one supervisor MUST BE present.

**6.0 PROGRESS REPORTS AND NOTICES OF THESIS SUBMISSION**

All supervisors are expected to sign and endorse the progress and notice of submission forms. If however, a supervisor is not available, the main supervisor's signature shall suffice, but names of the other supervisors must be written in their specified positions. A note on why any of them cannot sign must be attached. However, it is preferred that supervisors who are out of the country should write to confirm their approval. A copy of duly signed forms should also be left at the respective department for filing.

All students will be expected to submit their progress reports quarterly.

All students are required to submit their "Notice of Thesis Submission" 3 months in advance of thesis submission. Failure to do so, then the student will have to re-submit the **Notice** in accordance with the above-mentioned requirement.

## 7.0 THESIS FORMAT

The standard format shall comprise

a) **Cover Page** (same as in proposal)

Full name of student should appear as it is in the registration form, while the registration number should be written below the name, together with the name of the Department, then follows the writing. “A Research Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment for the Degree of ... (Specify e.g. master of Science) in the School of Applied Human Sciences of Kenyatta University”. Then the date e.g. **May** 2012.

b) **Declaration Page** (should be similar to that in the proposal except that the word “Proposal” is replaced with “thesis,” followed by the declaration words.” This is my original work ..... (As it is in the proposal).

c) **Dedication statement** not exceeding 25 words for Masters’ thesis and 30 words for Ph.D thesis may follow declaration, beginning on a separate page.

d) **Acknowledgement** – This, beginning on a separate page, should follow dedication and not exceeding 200 words.

e) **Abstract** (As it is in proposal except it captures results and the recommendations **and should not exceed one page.**

f) **Abbreviations/Acronyms** (As it is in proposal)

g) **Operational Definition of Terms**

h) **Table of Contents**

This begins on a new page. It should assist the reader to know quickly and clearly, how the thesis is organized. There must be consistency in the use of headings and subheadings.

i) **List of Tables**

This follows the table of contents, beginning on a separate page. Numbering of tables should be: Table 1.1, 2.1, 3.1...throughout the text.

j) **List of figures**

This immediately follows the list of tables and on a separate page. Numbering should be figure 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 etc. The name/title of the figure and source(s) should be written below it.

- k) Numbering of Chapter and subtitles in thesis should be based on Chapter numbers e.g. subtitles in chapter one should be numbered as 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, etc.

## 8.0 USE OF TABLES, FIGURES AND PLATES

Tables, Figures and Plates may be included within the text or appear on separate pages. If on separate pages, however, they should be placed near the text, which refers to them.

Each table or figure shall have a full caption. Tables, figures and plates should be numbered in sequence and be cited by a number in the text (numbering sequence is as shown in the previous section on proposals). A table that is oversized may be divided so that a portion appears on two pages, which face each other. If this method is used, the entire title and footnotes, if any, appear on the left hand side of a table.

Photographs should be scanned and printed on A4 paper and on appropriate pages.

### Guidelines on tables and figures

- Place a table or figure immediately after the first mention of it in the text on the same page if there is room, or on the following page.
- Tables or figures of peripheral importance to the text may be placed in an appendix.
- All tables and figures must be referred to in the text by number (not by a phrase such as “the following table”).
- Avoid using colour to distinguish different lines or areas in a figure because the distinction will be lost when your work is photocopied or microfilmed.
- Words included in the figure should be typed unless there are technical reasons why this is not possible.
- List and caption photographs as figures unless you wish to have a separate list of photographs or plates.
- *Landscape*, If a table/figure is set up in landscape orientation then it should always be on a page by itself. Landscaped materials must be placed reading outward (i.e., with the top of the table/figure at the binding [left] side of the page). This page must have a page number. The page number, however, should be in portrait orientation like all other page numbers.
- Each figure must have a caption that begins with the word “Figure” (“F” capitalized) and the figure number, followed by a brief description of the figure. This must be placed below the figure, with one blank line separating the bottom of the figure and the top of the caption as follows:-

Figure, Chapter number, figure number, description e.g. *Figure 4.3*. Schematic of control system for the methanol-water column.

- Each table must have a caption that begins with the word “Table” (T capitalized) and the table number, followed by a brief description of the table. This must be placed above the table, with one blank line separating the bottom of the caption and the top of the table.

Table 3.2. *Performance measures obtained using the proposed procedure.*

When a figure or table is continued to the following page, a continuation note (e.g., “Figure 5, continued” or “Table 5, continued”) must appear in place of the caption on the continuations. The original caption must be repeated in either case.

## 9.0 REFERENCES

APA is the recommended conventional referencing technique for both in-text-citation and references. Reference should follow chapter V.

## 10.0 CHAPTERS

Chapters one to three have content and form as those described in the section for proposal. The future tense must change to past tense where applicable.

## 11.0 CHAPTER FOUR: FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter should deal with the interpretation and explanation of the findings of the study with regard to the stated hypotheses and research questions. Internal Inconsistency in view of the research problem, the reviewed literature should be seen in the explanation.

### Guidelines of Chapter Four

- An overview of the findings need be mentioned.
- Discussion the findings is to be based on the objectives. The results are actual presentation of observations, including statistics, tables and graphs.
- Move from the descriptive (univariate) to the inferential statistics (multivariate) Mention negative results as well as positive. Concur and critique other studies.
- Lay out the case as for a jury. Present sufficient details so that others can draw their own inferences and construct their own explanations.
- Break up your results into logical segments by using subheadings.
- Key results should be stated in clear sentences at the beginning of paragraphs. It is far better to say “X had significant positive relationship with Y (Linear regression  $p < 0.01$ ,  $r^2 = 0.79$ )” than to start with a less informative like “There is a significant relationship between X and Y”. Describe the nature of the findings; do not just tell the reader whether or not they are significant.

The discussion section should be a brief essay in itself, answering the following questions and caveats:

1. What are the major patterns in the observations?
2. What are the relationships, trends and generalizations among the results?
3. What are the exceptions to these patterns or generalizations?
4. What are the likely causes (mechanisms) underlying these patterns resulting predictions?
5. Is there agreement or disagreement with previous work?
6. Interpret results in terms of background laid out in the introduction – what is the relationship of the present results to the original question?
7. What is the implication of the present results for other unanswered questions?
8. Multiple hypotheses: There are usually several possible explanations for results. Be careful to consider all of these rather than simply pushing your favorite one. If you can eliminate all but one, that is great, but often that is not possible with the data in hand. In that case you should give even treatment to the remaining possibilities, and try to indicate ways in which future work may lead to their discrimination.
9. Avoid bandwagons: A special case of the above. Avoid jumping a currently fashionable point of view unless your results really do strongly support them.
10. What are the things we now know or understand that we didn't know or understand before the present work?
11. Include the evidence or line of reasoning supporting each interpretation.
12. What is the significance of the present results: why should we care?

## **12.0 CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This Chapter should have a summary of findings. Besides conclusion and recommendations, the implication of findings should be explained here. It is in this chapter that additional research areas should be suggested as well as future projection based on the study.

The specific areas include:

- i. Summary**  
Summary of the major findings among others to begin here.

- ii. **Conclusions**  
Summary of the implications of the main findings, Emphatic, strong conclusions based on the study findings should be stated here.
- iii. **Recommendations for Policy/Practice**  
Summary of the main recommendations based on the study findings and logical statements in the conclusion should be stated here.
- iv. **Recommendations for Further Research**  
What is considered to be gaps left out by the study, which would need further investigation through research should be given.
- v. **The references and then appendices should follow this chapter.**

### 13.0 REFERENCES

The recommended referencing style for the school is **latest** APA for all students to follow or use.

### 14.0 SPECIFIC GUIDE FOR PROPOSAL REVIEWING

The following is the specific guide for reviewing proposals, which will be closely followed. (Note that the information given is only a summary).

- a) **Title**
  - Appropriateness
  - Focus
- b) **Background to the problem**
  - The problem and its originality should be clearly shown and stated.
  - Objectives, research questions well stated.
  - Hypothesis well stated.
  - Conceptual and theoretical framework well framed.
  - Rationale/purpose of the study and other matters such as assumptions, scope, etc spelt out closely.
- c) **Literature review**
  - Flow of the literature
  - Relevance of the content synthesized suits the study.
  - Identification of the gaps.
  - Current status of the research problem.
  - Must avoid plagiarism.

d) **Methodology**

- Research design and location
- Target population and sample
- Sampling techniques
- Methods of data collection, reliability and validity of the instruments
- Variables; dependent and independent
- Methods of data analysis
- Appropriateness of the methodology

**NB:** All the above sections must be presented in a way that gives internal consistency and coherence.

e) **References**

- Link references to the text.
- References especially in the text must be accurate.
- Be used exhaustively.
- Variety of references be used.
- Currently published material used as much as possible.
- **Latest** APA used for bibliography and in-text citation.

f) **Time- Schedule**

- Should show practicability
- Show distribution of activities
- Should show logic

g) **Budget**

- Budget itemization
- Appropriateness of the budget lines
- Budget carefully thought out

h) **Format**

Overall presentation, including content of the proposal.

- The above information is only a summary guide. Fine details may be found and harmonized with that provided to **candidates**.
- The reviewer can consider other useful aspects that can help the **candidate(s)** to improve on his/her proposal.

## **15.0 SPECIFIC GUIDE FOR THESIS REVIEWING**

Start: Information in chapter I-III of the proposal remains the same except the future tense is changed to past tense.

### **15.1 Chapter 1V: Emphasis to be on the following:**

#### **a) Results**

- Accuracy
- Relevance to the objectives, research questions and hypothesis.
- Consistent organization format

#### **b) Data analysis**

- Accuracy
- Originality
- Use of appropriate statistical tools.
- Relevance to objectives and research questions
- Data should be seen to answer research questions, reject or accept hypotheses.

#### **c) Discussion**

- Academic argumentation shall prevail
- Show ability to view results in the light of the previous findings contained in literature review.
- Show insight into the research findings and subsequent arguments.

### **15.2 CHAPTER V: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations**

Emphasis should be on the following areas:

#### **a) Summary**

- Conciseness and relevance
- Summarize the entire study.

#### **b) Conclusion**

- Show logical statements
- Derived from the findings leading to appropriate clue for recommendations.

#### **c) Recommendations**

- Derived from the study findings
- Reasonable.

#### **d) Further research**

- Derived from the gaps created by the study.
- Based on the study findings

#### **e) Referencing**

- Main referencing techniques followed i.e. American Psychology Association (APA).
- Ensure that the recommended one i.e. APA technique is followed.

## 16.0 EXAMPLES OF REFERENCES

### (i) **Book**

Canlcutt, R. (1999). **Statistics in Research and Development (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)**. London: Chapman & Hall

### (ii) **Edited Book**

Lethe ridge, S. and Cannon. C.R (eds.) (1980) Bilingual Education: **Teaching English as Senior Language**. New York: Praeger.

NB: This is for an edited book without different contributors.

With contributors it will be as follows:

Hartley, J.T; Harker, J.O & Ealsh, D.A. (1980). Contemporary Issues and New Directions in Adult development of Learning and Memory. L.W Poon (ed.). **Ageing in the 1990s: Psychological Issues (pp. 232-252)**. Washington DC, American Psychology Association.

### (iii) **Journal**

Horowitz, L. M., Post, D.L, French, R. S., Wallis, K. D. & Segelman, E. Y. (1981). The Prototype as a Construct in Abnormal Psychology; 2 Clarifying Disagreement in Psychiatric Judgments. **Journal of abnormal psychology**, 90, 575 – 585

NB: Names of all the authors are given the reference writing, but in-text citation, use of “*etal*” comes after author.

### (iv) **Newspaper**

- Lubin, J.S. (1980, 5<sup>th</sup> December). On Idle; the Unemployed Shun much Mundane Work, at Least for a While. The Wall Street Journal, pp.1, 25.
- Study Finds Free Care Used more (1982, April). APA monitor, P. 14.

NB: This is an article without an author. The title of the article takes the place of the Author.

### (v) **Magazine**

Gardener, H. (1981). Do Babies have a Universal Song? Psychology Today, pp.70-

### (vi) **Newsletter**

Staff, (1980, 1<sup>st</sup> September). Professionals Face Tax Rises as IRS Targets Personal.

Service Corporation. Behavior Today p.5

## **17.0 GUIDELINES TO SUPERVISORS**

### **a) Basic Responsibilities**

Ensuring that the student:

- Develops and writes focused researchable topic.
- Writes clear and precise statement of the problem.
- Works within the frame guidelines, specified in this document.
- Follows correct organization format, including conventionally written references.
- Develops correct academic argumentation, including in-text citation.
- Does not allow plagiarism.

## **18.0 CONCLUSION**

It is hoped that this guide will be of value to both the students and supervisors. The guide is however subject to review from time to time depending on operation policies that may emerge at the Graduate School or at the School of **Applied Human Sciences**.

**SAHS – BPS**

**S E C R E T A R I A T**