



UNIVERSITY OF VENDA HIGHER DEGREES

GUIDELINES FOR THE PREPARATION OF MASTER AND DOCTORAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS

The purpose of this document is to provide generic assistance to masters or doctoral students on the requirements, for the research proposals submitted to the University Higher Degrees Co1nmittee (UHDC) for approval. The guarantors of the scientific merit and feasibility of students' research proposals are the respective departmental faculties through their supervisors or promoters. This guideline sets out the main components of a submission to the UHDC. While the Committee strives for consistency in the standards of proposals, it is also cognizant of the diversity of disciplines within the various Faculties. Therefore, these guidelines are flexible and can be modified accordingly.

1. Abstract

- The abstract should succinctly capture the study background, broad objectives, methods and expected outcomes.
- The abstract should not be more than 300 words.
- Provide 5 to 7 key words.

2. Introduction and literature review

- The introduction provides the context in which the proposed project is to be carried out - what is known, new developments, and potential future directions.
- This section gives the reader a good background on where the proposed study is nested in the discipline.
- It should be supported by recent citations as much as possible.

3. Rationale/Research question/Justification of the Study

- This section explains the importance of the work; In other words, why should it be conducted and who will benefit from the study.
- This section, like every section of the proposal, it should be clearly linked to the preceding sections.

4. Objectives or Aims of the Study

- State the overall aim or goal of the proposed study; at most three sentences may be sufficient.
- List the broad/main objective (or aim) followed by the specific objectives to be achieved to attain the overall aim.
- Note that a study may have more than one aim or may have a general objective and specific objectives.
- Some disciplines prefer to use a list of research questions.

- It is advisable to use only one option for the purposes of the proposal and not both since in many cases, confusion arises when both options are included.

5. Hypotheses

- This section should state or list unambiguously the hypotheses that are to be tested in the study.
- A study can have more than one hypothesis or primary and secondary hypothesis. (Although hypothesis-driven studies are the most innovative, not every study is driven by a hypothesis).

6. Materials and Methods or Methodology or Study Design

- This section should describe the details of the procedures or approaches to be followed or applied to execute the study objectives and test the hypotheses or answer the research question(s).
- Often, studies with more than one aim or broad objectives may need a study (or experimental) design.
- Note that the study design describes the landscape, context or environment in which the study will be conducted.
- An inappropriate study design will make the study outcome unreliable or not credible).
- This section should also indicate how the data will be gathered (or collected) and analyzed.
- Analytic tools and approaches chosen should be relevant to the goal of the study.
- It is not sufficient, for example to simply state that data will be analyzed qualitatively or with SPSS

7. Expected Outcomes

- This section should state the potential conclusions or recommendations from the study or the products of the study (for instance, conference papers, journal papers, etc).

8. Workplan /Milestones / Deliverables

- Provide a timeline of activities, milestones, and deliverables.
- The use of a table or a gannt chart is the student's choice.

9. Budget

- A budget for all activities in the project is required.
- The student should provide a breakdown of the budget lines whenever applicable, without rounding-off the cost of each item and justification.
- The source of funding should be indicated.
- Note that laptops, scientific visits, workshops and conference attendance are funded through different mechanisms and should not be included in the budget.
- a detailed break-down of items is required (no rounding-off; for example, 1 packet latex gloves x 3 @ R71.41 each = R214.23 and NOT R200.00 or R210.00 or R215.00)

10. References

- A list of journal articles and other sources published (or unpublished) used in the text of the proposal is required.
- The referencing style used (Harvard or Vancouver or otl1er system) is a matter of choice. However, there should be consistency in the style chosen.
- There should also be consistency in the listing format. For example, if the title of the journal is in bold face, this should be applied throughout the reference section (that is, to all the journal titles).

Check list:

The following components of the proposal should accompany each proposal irrespective of the discipline:

1. Signatures:-

- proposals should be signed by the student and all supervisors on the front page.
- By signing the proposal, the student and supervisors undertake to adhere to the principles of responsible conduct of research.

2. Abstract, Cover Page and Table of Contents:-

- these should accompany each proposal irrespective of the discipline.

3. Proof-reading:-

- as the proposal is just a concept note, the certificate of proof-reading must be provided with the final proposal that is send to the UHDC.by a senior staff member in the Faculty with experience on the topic and good grasp of scientific writing using English language
- Please make sure you use British (UK) English for spell check and language editing.

4. Font size, line spacing and margins of the proposal:-

- If using Word, then the proposal should be typed in Arial font, size 11, with a line spacing of 1.5 and margins set at 2 cm. An example of the structure of a proposal using the above sections is illustrated below.
- Mathematical and Computational Sciences students can use their special writing programme to write the proposal because of the symbols and equations used.
- No logos or picture must be added to the front page

5. The length of proposals:-

- For Masters dissertation the length should not exceed 20 pages (excluding the cover page and Table of contents)
- For Doctoral thesis the length should not exceed 30 pages (excluding the cover page and Table of contents)

Front page of the proposal (Please note – no logo or any other figures/pictures):-

Title of Research Topic

by

Student Name

Student#

Research Proposal for the
Master of Science (or Doctor of Philosophy) Degree in **Field of Study**
in the Department of,
Faculty of Science, Engineering and Agriculture

University of Venda
Thohoyandou, Limpopo Province, South Africa

Supervisor:

Co-supervisor:..... .

Co-supervisor: .. .

Abstract:-

[Maximum 300 words]

Keywords:.....;(in alphabetical order)

Declaration: -

I, (First name and Surname) [student number], declare that this research proposal is my original work and has not been submitted for any degree at any other university or institution. The proposal does not contain other persons' writing unless specifically acknowledged and referenced accordingly.

Signed (Student):

Date:

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Chapter One: Introduction1

1.0. General Introduction..... **3**

1.1. Problem Statement

1.2. Rationale of the Study

1.3. Objectives of the Study (or Aim)

1.3. 1. Broad Objective of the Study

1.3.2. Specific Objectives of the Study

1.4. Hypotheses

Chapter Two: Literature Review

(All relevant aspects of the study topic)

Chapter Three: Materials and Methods (or Methodology)

(Experimental Design and Data Analysis)

Chapter Four: Work Schedule, Budget and Expected Outcomes

Chapter Five: References

Example of a good budget:-

| ITEM | QUANTITY | UNIT COST (R) | TOTAL (R) |
|--|-----------------------------|---------------|-----------------|
| PRINTING | | | 12 200 |
| Printing of proposal | 1 copy (40 pages each) | 5 | 200 |
| Printing of questionnaires | 400 copies (3 pages each) | 5 | 6000 |
| Printing of final research | 10 copies of 120 pages each | 5 | 6000 |
| PROOF READING | | | 7200 |
| Proof reading for proposal | 40 pages | 45 | 1800 |
| Proof reading for finished research | 120 pages | 45 | 5400 |
| STATIONERY and COMSUMABLES | | | 1196 |
| Stapler | 1 | 50 | 50 |
| Staple pins | 1 box | 30 | 30 |
| Puncher | 1 | 100 | 100 |
| File | 1 | 50 | 50 |
| Pens | 3 | 10 | 30 |
| Hard drive | 1 | 900 | 900 |
| Staple remover | 1 | 36 | 36 |
| DATA ANALYSIS | | | 8000 |
| Statistician (analysing data) | 1 | 8000 | 8000 |
| SUBSISTENCE AND TRAVELLING | | | 9937.86 |
| Research assistant: Data collection and coding @ R50 per hour x8 hours per day (1 research assistant) | 21 days | 400 | 8400 |
| Travelling Expenses: trips to Tshilidzini from Thohoyandou and Back. (4 Trips by 26 km)x1 research assistant | 104 km | 3.61 | 375.44 |
| To Hayani from Thohoyandou and back. (4 Trips by 42 km) x 1 research assistant | 168 km | 3.61 | 606.48 |
| To Siloam Fraser Hospital and back. (4 Trips by 42 km) x 1 research assistant | 154 km | 3.61 | 555.94 |
| BINDING | | | 2 289.14 |
| Spiral Binding | 5 | 60 | 300 |
| Hard copy Binding | 5 | 200 | 1 000 |
| Transport to Louis Tritchard for binding (2 rounds trips by 68.7km) | 274.8 | 3.61 | 989.14 |
| Grand Total for the whole Research | | | 40 823 |