Guide to Doctoral Research Proposal Preparation

This guide is designed to provide students with general guidelines and instructions for preparing and formatting of doctoral research proposal for PhD application. It covers structure, layout, form, style, and referencing along with citation.

General Information

1. Proposal Title

The proposal must have a working title. The title will be finalized consulting with the supervisor and the DRAC.

2. Word Limit and Paper Size

The length of the proposal will be between 1000 to 2000 words. The recommended paper size is A4.

3. Language

A proposal will be written in English. However, a proposal on Bangla language, linguistics, literature, and culture may be written in Bangla language provided that an English translation of the Title and an Executive Summary of the proposal containing at least 500 words have been added. British or American English should be used consistently if the proposal is written in English, while *Sadhu* or *Cholito* form of Bangla should be maintained throughout the proposal, if written in Bangla.

4. General Formatting

4.1 Page Size

The proposal must be printed on A4 size page (8.27" x 11.69") with white background and black font for the text.

4.2 Margins

The margins must be 1 inch in every side in every page. Text should be justified.

4.3 Font

Times New Roman font should be used to prepare the proposal in English, while *SutonnyMJ/Nikosh* font for the proposal in Bangla. Font size will be as: Title on the Title page 14-point; headings and sub-headings 12-point; texts in tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images 10-point, footnotes and endnotes 8-point, and all other texts 12-point. Bold and italics may be used according to APA Publication Manual (7th ed.). "Capitalize Each Word" may be used for Headings.

4.4 Line Spacing

Line spacing will be as: SINGLE line space in tables, charts, diagrams, graphs, images, footnotes and endnotes; SINGLE line space for caption of tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images; SINGLE line space for footnotes of tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images; 1.5-point line space for other parts of the proposal; and DOUBLE line space between paragraphs and entries of references, footnotes, endnotes, and block quotation.

4.5 Indentation

1st line of the 1st paragraph in a section should be with justified aligned, not indented. This style should be maintained after an extract or block quotation. First line of the second and subsequent paragraphs under a heading or sub-heading, however, should be intended by 0.5-inch. Block quotation should also be left indented only by 0.5-inch.

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4.6 Page Numbering

Page numbers (Arabic numeral) should appear at the center of the bottom of the page starting from the page next to the title page. The position of the page numbers should not change even on pages with landscape mode illustrations.

4.7 Footnotes and Endnotes

Footnotes are allowed sparingly placed at the bottom of each page for easy reference, but endnotes are discouraged. The footnote reference is superscripted and the explanation at the bottom of the page begins with the footnote reference number. Footnotes and endnotes should be numbered in Arabic numeral consecutively using word processor.

4.8 Abbreviations

Term abbreviations should only be used if the abbreviation is relevant and useful to the readers and is used frequently. Use the full term first with abbreviation in parenthesis followed by abbreviation only subsequently. Consistency should be maintained in using abbreviations throughout the manuscript.

4.9 Quotations

Quotations are to be used and cited according to the APA Publication Manual (7th Edition).

4.10 Documentation

Authors will be required to follow the APA Publication Manual (7th ed.) for in-text citation as well as reference.

4.11 Tables, Figures, Charts, Diagrams, Graphs, and Images

Tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images should be provided in the highest quality and placed next to the relevant text but not at the end of the proposal. Tables must be included as editable text and not as images. Vertical lines and shading in table cells should be avoided. Legends of tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images should be succinct but thorough. Tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images, and their legends and footnotes should all be understandable without referring to the text. All abbreviations, symbols, and units of measurement must be defined in the footnotes of tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images, and significant statistical values should be foregrounded. All tables, figures, charts, diagrams, graphs, and images must have relevant captions, and these must be numbered separately but consecutively based on their appearance in the proposal. Figures must have numbers and captions under the figures (Fig. 1. Effect of X and Y), while Tables have their titles and numbers above (Table 1. List of X). They must be placed with center alignment.

4.12 Drawings

Any material which cannot be typed, or computer generated should be drawn with permanent black ink in neat and heavy lines. Photographs of drawings are acceptable. Xerox and photoshop reproductions of drawings and/or photographs are acceptable if they are of high contrast. High-quality scanned images can also be inserted into the proposal text. If necessary, photographs can be mounted with glue and photocopied.

4.13 Headings and sub-headings in main text

Heading 1: Level 1 heading style (Bold, not Italicized) (Introduction, Literature review, Objectives of the study/Research questions/Hypotheses, Methodology,

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Expected results, and Conclusion should be in the Heading 1).

Heading 2: Level 2 heading style (Bold and Italicized) (e.g., Heading 2 "Instrumentation" under the Heading 1 "Methodology")

Heading 3: Level 3 heading style (No Bold but Italicized) (e.g., Heading 3 "Pilot Study" under Heading 2 "Instrumentation")

Heading 4: Level 3 heading style (No Bold but Italicized). (Put a colon after the heading and start the texts after the colon)

4.14 Bulleted & numbered lists

- For bulleted lists

(1) For numbered lists

4.15 Print Quality

Clear, clean, and sharp copies are required. A high-quality laser printer should be used for printing the proposal manuscript. In the case of photocopied materials, there should not be any fading, extraneous marks or grey background.

4.16 Printing

The proposal should be printed on a single-sided format.

5. Sequence of Content

5.1 Background and Justification of the Study

5.2 Problem Statement/Research Gap

5.3 Objectives of the Study

5.4 Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (if necessary)

5.5 Research Methodology/Materials and Methods

5.6 Expected Research Outcomes

5.7 References

6. Body of Proposal

Background and Justification of the Study

The background of the study includes a review of the area being researched, current information surrounding the issue, previous studies on the issue, and relevant history on the issue. Ideally, the study should effectively set forth the history and background information of the research problem you are dealing with. The purpose of a background study is to help you prove the relevance of your research questions and to further develop your thesis. Tables, figures, etc. can be added in this section with appropriate references. This section can have sub-section(s) depending on the necessity.

Problem Statement/Research Gap

A statement of problem refers to the critical issue that your research aims to address. In other words, it captures gap in the existing knowledge that your study aims to bridge using reliable results or outcomes. The research problem or gap is identified through an extensive literature review. It can be as little as a few sentences or go all the way to several paragraphs—what matters is it communicates the central focus of your study.

Objectives of the Research

While the previous section deals with the problem formulation, the aim(s) and objectives of your research provide an accurate description of the specific actions you will take to reach the aim(s). The objectives should systematically address the various research

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questions. They should specify what you will do in your study, where, and for what purpose. Each objective consists of one infinitive sentence and should be phrased in a way that makes it possible to draw a conclusion from within the scope of the thesis. The more precisely you formulate your objectives, the simpler it will be to define the type of study and which method(s) you will use in your further research. Your objectives will signal your level of aspiration as well as where you will place the greatest effort in your thesis.

The objectives can be followed by research questions and/or hypotheses. In case of research questions, the researchers' activities will be to find out answers to the research questions, while in case of hypotheses, the researchers will be testing his/her hypotheses to be proved or disproved.

Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (if necessary)

A conceptual framework elucidates what you aim to explore through your research. It defines the key variables for your study and maps out how they might relate to each other. You should construct a conceptual framework before you begin collecting data. It is often represented in a visual format like a diagram or flowchart.

Research Methodology/Materials and Methods

The methodology describes the broad philosophical underpinning to your chosen research methods. It should be linked back to the literature to explain why you are using certain materials, methods, and the academic basis of your choice.

A well laid out and logical methodology will provide you a great backbone for the entire research and will allow you to build an extremely strong results section. The only real difficulty with the methods section is finding the balance between keeping the section short, whilst including all the relevant information. The section will discuss research paradigm, approach, design, sample and sampling, instrumentation, materials used, data collection methods and techniques, data analysis procedures, data interpretation and presentation etc.

Expected Research Outcomes

This section should give a good indication of what you expect to get out of the research. It should join the data analysis and possible outcomes to the theory and questions that you have raised. It will be a good place to summarize the significance of the work. These outcomes should be in line with the aims and objectives of the research. The section will address set research questions and hypotheses.

References

A full list of references to key texts and articles must be included according to the APA Citation Manual (7th ed.).