



**KENYATTA UNIVERSITY**  
**SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH**

**BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

**GUIDELINES FOR WRITING RESEARCH  
PROPOSAL AND THESIS**

**APRIL 2017 EDITION**

## **PREAMBLE**

This working document is a general guide for students to write research proposals, projects and theses.

This document also will help supervisors in guiding postgraduate students in matters related to research preparation, thesis production and project work.

In addition, the document explains ways of maintaining quality supervision among postgraduate students and their supervisors (see section 9 – 12). It also hints 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 (see 9 and 9.1, a & b).

In order to produce an agreeable guide, it is proposed that SHS, BPS and the Dean of the School exhaustively discuss this document.

# **1. GENERAL INFORMATION AND UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES ON ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS AND THESES OF HEALTH SCIENCE TYPE**

## **1.1 Supervision**

Every Department shall formulate and execute its own policy on the identification and allocation of supervisors. In principle, every student will have 2 supervisors. The lead supervisor shall be from the Department where the student is registered. If no suitable supervisor is available from the Department, a Supervisor could be sourced from within the School of Public Health. Beyond the School, a supervisor could be sought from any Department in the University so long as the person identified is in the candidate's area of study. If at all a third supervisor will be incorporated justification must be given.

## **1.2 Responsibilities of Supervisors**

As principle resource persons to the students, supervisors shall:

- Be available for consultation at least once per month
- Respond to any written materials from their students within at most 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 theses
- 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 reports progress of a student's studies are submitted as required by University regulations
- Ensure that a student presents seminars at appropriate levels are required by the University regulations.

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

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

## **1.3 Role of SPH – BPS**

With the decentralisation of proposal development and review at Departments, SPH – BPS will be concerned with:-

- Clearing and forwarding of proposals to University Graduate School (GS), strictly adhering to the school's and University's format.
- Receive and forward progress reports.
- Receive notices of submission endorse external examiners and appoint examination board members.

- Attend to other matters that have bearing on postgraduate studies and that are within its mandate e.g. scrutinising new or revised academic programmes.

## 2. PROPOSAL FORMAT

### 2.1 Introduction

This guide is written with the awareness that some students have hitherto experienced difficulties in writing proposals and theses. The main weaknesses are:-

- i. Unfocussed proposal titles leading to internal/inconsistence and therefore rejected by School of Graduate Studies (SGS).
- ii. Unclear statement of the problem
- iii. Incoherent literature review
- iv. Unclear study design and choice of methods of data analysis.

### 2.2 Content

#### (a) Cover Page

- i) The cover page will be not have bear page number.
- ii) All wording should be singled-spaced
- iii) Items will be arranged on the following sequence:

- TITLE should be focused, informative and not more than **20 words**
- Full names of student followed by highest qualification in standard abbreviation in brackets.
- Registration number of student below the name
- Name of Department

Then follows the writing:-

“A research proposal submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of (specify, eg. Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy] in the School of Public Health of Kenyatta University.”

#### (b) Student Declaration Page (Page ii)

To have the following writings:

“This proposal is my original work and has not been presented for a degree in any other University.” Then the student signs above his/her name and registration number, followed by the date.

e.g.

Signature ..... Date .....

Name Kinyoi, Daniel Mumo  
E55/9307/2004

Supervisors: This proposal has been submitted for review with our approval as University Supervisors.

The supervisors, each with starting with main, sign above at least two of their names written in full, together with their respective departments.

For example,

1. Signature..... Date .....  
Prof. Ephantus Kabiru  
XYZ Department

2. Signature..... Date .....  
Dr. Otieno Ochieng  
XYZ Department

**(c) Abbreviations and Acronyms (Page iii)**

Abbreviations and acronyms need to be given because they may be found in the proposal

**(c) Definition of Operational Terms (Page iv)**

Various terminologies used in the proposal or thesis are defined here

**(d) Abstract (Page v)**

All proposals must have an abstract, which should not exceed one page; should be single-spaced and not paragraphed. The abstract should consist of precise spectrum of the entire proposal including opening sentences, the main objective, methods (including data analysis) and justification. It should give an overview of the proposal.

**3. FORMAT OF MAIN BODY**

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

All sub and sub-sub sections should be in lower case (not capital letters).

**3.1 CHAPTER I - INTRODUCTION**

**(a) Background to the study**

Gives overview of the study focusing on the Title of the work to be done. It should contain minimum literature review. This section should be maximum one and half pages. It should give a global, regional and local overview, narrowing to the problem being studied.

**(b) Problem statement**

The problem should be identified as pertaining to the study area. It should answer the question of the problem being studied in the specific study location.

**(c) Justification**

Should address why the study in the specific site.

**(d) Research Questions**

**(e) Hypothesis(es)**

} To relate to objectives and testable

**(f) Objectives**

Should be clearly stated and achievable  
Should be SMART

**(g) Significance**

To explain the benefits and the beneficiaries of the findings of the study

**(h) Limitation and Delimitation**

**Limitation**

Gives the anticipated constraints which will limit the scope of the study. The section should explain how the constraints will be addressed to minimize the quality of the study.

**Delimitation**

Gives the extent to which the study will be carried out

**(i) Conceptual/Theoretical Framework**

This section depicts the concept as pertaining to the study. It is a broad picture of the connection between the elements of the study. A figure is usually included to capture the concept.

### **3.2 CHAPTER II - LITERATURE REVIEW**

The student should demonstrate evidence of understanding the 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 conceptual framework content. Thus, relevant themes to the study and derived review should be consistent with the requirements of the title (internal consistency) and aspects of the introduction e.g. background to the study. Extraneous material should be avoided.

### **3.3 CHAPTER III - MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This Chapter highlights methodological details appropriate to the study. Thus:

**(a) Research Design**

State and justify the chosen design

- (b) Variables**  
Explain the independent and dependent variables
- (c) Location of the Study**  
State where the study will be done (locate) and why it was chosen
- (d) Study Population**  
Describe the study population; describing specifically who will be part of the study. Keep in mind the UNIT of measurement
- (e) Sampling Techniques**  
Explain clearly the methods that will be used to select the sample.
- (f) Sample Size Determination**  
Describe how the sample size will be computed invoking the formulae to be used.
- (g) Construction of Research Instruments**  
Explain the instruments that will be used in the study and how they will be constructed
- (h) Pilot Study and Pre-Testing**  
Describe how piloting and pre-testing centres will be selected. [This will depend on the type of study].
- (i) Validity**  
Explain how the validity of the instruments will be established
- (j) Reliability**  
Show and explain how the reliability of the instruments will be established N.B. IF using standardized test, quote test and existing validity and reliability levels
- (k) Data Collection Techniques**  
Explain clearly how data collection will be done
- (l) Data Analysis**  
Explain the methods that will be applied in analyzing the data.
- (l) Logistical and Ethical Considerations**  
This section must be done in conformity with Ethical Review Committee recommendations. The proposal will be submitted to an Ethical Review Committee before approval for commencement of the study.

### **3.4 REFERENCES**

References should be single spaced and listed alphabetically in the reference list. For citation within the text the format of author and year of publication is recommended as APA system in conformity with the KU format.

### **3.5 APPENDICES**

Will include such items as work plan, budget, maps, questionnaires, etc. numbered sequentially.

## **4. PROPOSAL PRESENTATION DETAILS**

### **(a) Typing**

**4.1** All proposals in the School of Public Health should be typed in font 12 (Times New Roman) on A4 size paper, double spaced, and on one side of the page.

**4.2** Page margins will be as follows: left 40 mm (1.5 inches) all other sizes 25 mm (1 Inch)

**4.3** Page numbering e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc should be top centre and start on the **INTRODUCTION** page. All preceding pages except cover page should have Roman Numbering system (i.e. i, ii, iii, etc)

**4.4** The proposal should not exceed 20 pages for a masters thesis and 30 pages for Ph.D. thesis, excluding references and appendices

**4.5** Pagination: From title page, Abstract page, the numbering will be in Roman lower case numbers (i, ii etc) in a consecutive manner.

a. Note that the text (from Chapter 1 to Appendices) should be numbered consecutively using Arabic numbers, the page number should appear in top centre

**4.6** Bullets should not be used in the proposal or theses

### **(b) Tense**

Future tense should be used in writing proposals

## **5. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSAL TO SPH – BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

Three spiral bound copies, duly signed by the student and all supervisors will be handed to SPH –BPS by the departmental representative to the board.

## **6. PROGRESS REPORTS AND NOTICES OF THESIS SUBMISSION**

All supervisors are expected to sign and endorse the progress and notice of submission forms.

Abstracts attached to the notices of thesis submission should not exceed one page, must be single-spaced, and should bear the student's name, registration number and the title of the thesis.

## **7. THESIS FORMAT**

The standard format shall comprise:-



- 7.1 Title Page (Page i)**  
Same as in proposal
- 7.2 Author**  
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 for the degree of ..... {Specify e.g. Master of Public Health (Epidemiology and Disease Control)} in the School of Public Health of Kenyatta University**”. Then the date e.g. APRIL 2017.
- 7.3 Declaration Page (Page ii)**  
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 in the proposal).
- 7.4 Dedication Statement (Page iii)**  
Not exceeding 25 words for Masters Thesis and 30 words for Ph.D Thesis. This follows declaration, beginning on a separate page.
- 7.5 Acknowledgement (Page iv)**  
This, begins on a separate page, should follow dedication and not exceeding 200 words.
- 7.6 Table of Contents (Page v)**  
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 sub-headings.
- 7.7 List of Tables (Page vi)**  
This follows the table of contents, beginning on a separate page. Numbering should be: Table 1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc for tables on Chapter 1. Similarly Table 2.1, 2.2, 2.3 ..... Table 3.1, 3.2, 3.3 ..... Table 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 ..... Table 5.1, 5.2, 5.3 ..... for those in other respective chapters.
- 7.8 List of figures (Page vii)**  
This follows the list of tables and on a separate page. Numbering should be Figure 1.1., 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 ... etc, according to the chapters.
- 7.9 List of Plates (Page viii)**  
This follows the list of figures and on a separate page. Numbering should be Plate 1.1., 1.2, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 ... etc, according to the chapters.
- 7.9 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 close to the text, which refers to them.

N.B.

- No table, figure or plate should occupy more than one page. They should also fit within the margins prescribed earlier.
- Each table or figure should 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).
- Photographs should be scanned and printed on A4 paper and on appropriate page.

**7.10 Abbreviation and Acronyms (Page ix)**

As it is in proposal

**7.12. Definition of Operational Terms (Page x)**

**7.13. Abstract (xi)**

As it is in proposal except the tense changes to past.

**7.14 CHAPTERS**

Chapters I to III have content and form as those described in the section for proposal. The future tense must change to past tense.

**7.14.1 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION**

**(a) Background to the study**

This gives specific gaps that were considered to be the root of the problem.

**(b) Statement of the problem**

Should be precise and focused. [as in proposal]

**(c) Justification**

Should be clearly stated. [as in proposal]

**(d) Research Questions and Hypothesis(es)**

Should related to the objectives and testable.

**(e) Objectives (Main and Specific)**

Should be clearly stated and should be achievable.

**(f) Delimitation and limitation (optional)**

Specifies the extent to which the study was carried out.

**(g) Assumptions (optional)**

Takes care of extraneous factors that may have affected the results of the study.

**(h) Conceptual framework and theoretical framework.**

Gives a conceptualized view of the study. If a certain theory fitted into a study, this should include indication and discussion of the same.

**(i) Significance of study**

To explain the benefits and the beneficiaries of the findings of the study

**7.14.2 CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The student should demonstrate evidence of understanding of current research on the subject under investigation and show clear gaps in knowledge that were addressed. Appropriate themes for this chapter can be developed using conceptual framework content. Thus:-

**2.1 Introduction**

**2.2 Relevant themes** to the study and derived from related literature should be developed and discussed here. The literature review should be consistent with the requirements of the title (internal consistency) and aspects of the “introduction” e.g. Background to the study”.

**2.3 Summary of Literature review isolating the gaps to be addressed**

**7.14.3 CHAPTER THREE: MATERIALS AND METHODS**

This chapter highlights methodology details appropriate to the study

**Research Design:** (to be stated as in proposal)

**3.1 Variables**

(as in proposal)

**3.2 Location of study**

(State where the study was due and why it was chosen)

**3.3 Study Population**

(Should describe the population who are subjects in the study)

**3.4 Sampling Techniques and Sample Size**

**3.4.1 Sampling Techniques**

Explanation of the sampling technique for each respondent (subject) to be selected

**3.4.2 Sample Size**

Explanation of the sample size and how it was determined

**3.5 Data collection tools/instruments**

Description of data collections tools or instruments

**3.6 Pilot Study or Pre-Testing**

Description of sharpening of the data collection instrument.

**3.6.1 Validity**

How the validity of the instruments were established.

### **3.6.2 Reliability**

How the reliability of the instruments were established.

### **3.7 Data Collection Techniques**

How data collection was done.

### **3.8 Data Analysis**

### **3.9 Logistical and ethical considerations**

Statement of this to be here

## **7.14.4 CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS.**

There should be minimum writing in this chapter. Tables, Figures etc should be used to present the data. Discussion should be avoided.

## **7.14.5. CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 Discussion**

Discuss the results and compare with other similar studies.  
Summary of the study should be included as the last section of discussion

### **5.2 Conclusion**

Emphatic, strong conclusion based on the study findings should be stated here and should be based on the specific objectives

### **5.3 Recommendations**

To be based on the conclusions  
Recommendations are categorized into two;

#### **5.3.1 Recommendations from the Study**

Directed to implementing agencies

#### **5.3.2 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

## **7.14.6 REFERENCES:**

As stated earlier

That the guidelines indicate that the recommended referencing style is APA, both in text and on the list of references

## **7.14.7 APPENDICES:**

Attach all appendices referred to in the thesis.