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## **BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES**

### **GUIDELINES FOR PREPARING RESEARCH THESES**

Research theses contain different features dictated by their mother/respective discipline. The differences give them discipline uniqueness. However, there are common salient features across all academic disciplines. These include:-

- The preliminaries
- The main text
- The references
- Appendices

Each of these has its unique components viz;

#### **1 THE PRELIMINARIES**

These preliminaries include:

- The cover- black or grey in colour.
- Spine-candidates surname and initials, the abbreviation for the degree. Writings from top of spine to bottom.
- Pagination: Bottom centred
- Margins: 1.00"right; 1.00" left and 1.00" bottom
- Maximum 300 pages (PhD)
- A minimum of 20, 000 words for Masters and 50,000 words for PhD
- List of candidate's publications (options); to appear as an appendix
- Legends/ Titles : tables – top  
Figures – bottom.
- Chapter headings must be x2 font bold capitals (upper case) and centred.
- Sub-section headings must be bold lower case
- All text must be in Times Roman sizes 12.
- The spacing should be 1.5
- The first line in a new paragraph must be indented 5 spaces.
- The title page.
- The declaration and recommendation page.
- Copy right- page.
- Dedication page (optional)
- Acknowledgements

- The Abstract.
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

#### 1. **TABLE OF CONTENTS:**

- This is a synopsis of the structural pattern of a thesis.
- It contains all major sections i.e. Chapter level headings. If the report is long, sub-headings may be included.
- The headings as listed in the table must be worded exactly as they appear in the body of the report.
- The wording and presentation (i.e. capitalization, use of special fonts and characters etc.) for all entries in the table of contents must match exactly with the text.
- All entries must have a corresponding page number with lead dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

#### 2. **LIST OF FIGURES:**

- These lists are governed by the same rules as the list of tables. (see below).
- Figures include graphs, photographic illustrations, maps and drawings.

#### 3. **LIST OF TABLES:**

- If the thesis contains a lot of tables, separate page should be devoted to the list of tables specifying the titles and page where tables can found in the thesis.
- The title of the table shall clearly indicate the number of the table and the chapter it is found in, e.g. Table 4.1 indicates Table 1 found in Chapter 4.
- The list of tables should be separate from the table of contents and should come immediately after the table of contents.
- All entries must contain a corresponding page number with lead dots or dashes connecting the entry to the page number.

#### 4. **LIST OF SYMBOLS/ABBREVIATIONS/**

- 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.

#### 5. **CHAPTER LAYOUT**

- All chapters should begin with a new page.
- Within a chapter, the presentation of sub-sections must be continuous
- Partially filled textual pages are acceptable only if followed by non- textual pages such as those presenting table and illustrations.
- Whenever the heading of a section or sub-section appears near the bottom of page, it must be followed by at least one complete line of text, or the headings should be forced to the top of the next page.
- Detailed organization of the text varies among academic disciplines. However, the formatting of the text must be consistent throughout.

#### 6. **GENERAL FORMAT**

The text should be in Times Romans Size 12 and spacing should be 1.5

## **II THE MAIN TEXT;**

A candidate will choose any of the following two options.

### **A. Option 1**

The main text is composed of:

#### **Chapter 1**

The introduction.

- The background to the problem
- The statement of the problem.
- The objectives.
- The Hypotheses/Premises/Research questions.
- The justification/significance of the study.
- The scope and limitations.

#### **Chapter 2**

- The Literature review.
- The theoretical framework.

#### **Chapter 3**

- The methodology/materials and methods.

#### **Chapter 4**

- Results.
- Discussion.

#### **Chapter 5 and 6**

- Conclusions& Recommendations.
- References.
- Appendices(optional).

### **B. Option 2**

- Chapter 1: General introduction same as option 1
- Chapter 2: General literature review.
- Chapter 3,4, 5 etc.: According to topics/experiments, objectives or papers. Each consists of:
  - Brief introduction
  - Literature review as pertains to that section only
  - Results
  - References relevant to the section only.

Under this option repetitions of literature review must be avoided and if this not possible, the thesis must be written as under option 1

## **III THE REFERENCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY**

Referencing format: APA style.

References consist of only those references the candidate has quoted in the text.

## **IV THE APPENDICES**

These consist of questionnaires, interview question guides, student's information sheet, observation schedules, transcription, informed consent forms and list of candidate's relevant publications. Data Analysis details and relevant raw data.

## **V SUGGESTED OUTLINES:**

### **7. TITLE PAGE:**

- This should bear the title of the thesis in capital letters followed below by the full names of the student.
- The title should be short, precise, concise and clear; about seven (7) to fifteen (15) words. It should relate to the subject matter of the thesis. It should also be captivating.
- This is followed by the following: "A thesis submitted to the School of ----- in partial fulfilment for the requirements of the ..... (Name of the degree) .... Degree in (Name of the Discipline)... of Laikipia University" should follow the title.
- Finally, the month and the year of presentation should be included.

### **8. THE DECLARATION AND RECOMMENDATION PAGE**

- On this page, the candidate should swear that the work is original and has not been presented for the award of any another degree elsewhere. This should be followed by the supervisor(s) declaration that the work has been presented with their approval.

### **9. THE ABSTRACT:**

Language: English

- One page
- At most two paragraphs

A summary which begins with a non-controversial statement about the study area followed by

- Background to the problem
- Justification
- Objectives
- Methods
- Results
- Conclusion
- Pagination of the above should be in lower case Roman numerals

### **10. INTRODUCTION**

- The introduction of the thesis should be brief and clear.
- It should give the reader an insight into the whole work, thereby acting as summary of the same.
- The best practice is to write the introduction last after all the other chapters have been completed. This way it captures what the research has actually done. It differs significantly from the proposal introduction as it captures what the actual research involved.
- It comes before Literature Review and hence exposes views of other authorities on the subject area. In a nutshell, it portrays the relevant aspects of the thesis such as the problem and significance of the study.
- It clearly shows the researcher's points of entry into the study area aligned to the specific objectives.

## **11. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY**

- This is what culminates into the scholar's curiosity to study the subject.
- A well-laid down context of the background to the study brings up a sound understanding of the topic of research. It
- Clearly indicates the research site, and locates the research in both the local and the global context
- The researcher begins to build their argument in the background which must then run through to the conclusion.
- Normally statistics (if applicable) help to build the researcher's argument in the background.
- History on the subject matter also helps to solidify the background
- The researcher begins their conversation with other scholars particularly by citing the most crucial and credible sources of information to support their argument(s).

## **12. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

- This is the nerve-centre of any research work, which should be adequately comprehended by the researcher at the onset.
- The problem must be clearly and conspicuously stated in just one paragraph.
- It should be clearly focused, without unnecessary preambles and ambiguity.
- It should clearly indicate the gap in knowledge that the researcher seeks to fill.
- In other words, what's the puzzle the researcher is trying to solve?

## **13. LITERATURE REVIEW**

- This is a selective and critical survey of written works of the subject area. It includes personal communication, articles, books, published and unpublished theses, journal papers, literature from newspapers and unpublished works to be limited.
- It is a critical analysis of the selected work that reveals what has already been researched on exhaustively and missing links that needs to be filled through further research.
- It provides background information, which jump-starts the research exercise.
- It is useful in providing information on the theoretical framework(s) that subsequently help to conceptualise the fieldwork results.
- Above all, it buttresses the researcher's statement of the problem by revealing that the area of study is untouched.
- Literature review is therefore, a story about what others have said and more importantly gives the researcher's voice on what other scholars have said.
- Literature review should be exhaustive, thorough, critical and informative and current.
- It should be based on and aligned to the objectives of the study

## **14. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY**

- Research being expensive in both in terms of money and time, it is imperative that its relevance is established at the onset order to save the researcher unnecessary expenses.
- One should prove that the research findings would be beneficial to the targeted consumers besides making a contribution to the existing knowledge.
- The significance of the study is essentially a clear indication of who benefits from the study and in what way.

## 15. HYPOTHESES

- A hypothesis is the guiding principle to an argument; leading to a valid and reliable conclusion.
- In the physical sciences, the hypothesis should be measurable in the final stages.
- Conversely, in the social sciences the hypothesis is difficult to measure, hence it remains a principle of assumption subject to confirmation through research.

## 16. OBJECTIVE

- These are the aims and goals of a given research. They provide the intellectual scope of research work.
- Objectives should be focused on the research problem in order to yield relevant data.
- Objectives should be SMART
- They should be stated in such a way that they align with the hypotheses and/or research questions.

## 17. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Like objectives, properly structured and implemented research questions yield useful and relevant data.
- The questions should, therefore, be structured to bring out the clarity and the relevance of what the researcher aims to achieve. Long and complicated questions should be avoided.
- The research questions should properly relate to the hypotheses or objectives of the study.

Research questions are preferred in the social sciences.

These research questions should be derived from the objectives of the study.

- The research questions should match the objectives of the study.
- A candidate chooses either hypothesis or research questions but not both.

## - THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK /CONCEPTUAL FRAME WORK

- A Theory is a model for or framework for observation and understanding which shape what we see and how we see it. A theory is a generalised statement that asserts a connection between two or more types of phenomena- any generalised explanatory principle. It refers to a system of interconnected abstractions or ideas that condenses and organises knowledge about the world. It explains and predicts the relationship between variables and has the capacity to generate research (Neuwman, 1997, cited in Sunday 2016).
- This section contains theories that exist on tackling a given research problem.
- In establishing a suitable theoretical framework, the researcher should consider both out-dated and modern theories, reveal the merits, demerits and limitations of each.
- The researcher should then choose either one whole already established framework, or a modification of one or several frameworks for solving the research problem at hand.
- The choice of framework should be convincingly justified. A clear mental plan or contemplation on how to steer the work and should be shown here.
- This section is important because it relates and co-ordinates the literature review, the problem, the significance of the study and objectives to the applied methodology.
- More importantly, the theoretical framework of a study represents the 'foundation' of the study; a well conceptualised theoretical framework provides a sound foundation for the study in question.

#### **18. SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS:**

- This is a review of the extent the research has taken. It is pegged on the geographical and intellectual area of study, the time taken, the resources used and the research design
- It justifies what, when and why the work was done as expressed.
- It portrays the established results under the given circumstances.

#### **19. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY/MATERIALS AND METHODS:**

- This is the procedure used in eliciting data from the field of study.
- The research design (field study, survey method, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study etc) is essential in terms of what data will be collected, how it will be collected, and what data collection instrument will be used.
- The intended sample and sample selection must be clearly identified and justified.
- Also includes description of the study location
- The data analysis method must be clearly stated and justified.
- This section should be well written in order to justify the validity and reliability of the study.

#### **20. DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS**

- This section must clearly and logically flow from the literature and hypotheses.
- It is important that you systematically analyse the data collected and clearly discuss the outcomes of the study.
- This involves making clear the implications for theory and practice.
- Tables may be used to effectively summarise data.

#### **21. APPENDICES:**

- All materials, which do not easily fit into the mainstream of the thesis write-up but are relevant to the work as a whole, should be retained as appendices either after or before the bibliography. These include questionnaires and interview guides, observation schedules etc,