



TRIBHUVAN UNIVERSITY
FACULTY OF MANAGEMENT
CENTRAL DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION
PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION CAMPUS



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Notice

The dissertation proposal writing guidelines and structure, duly approved by the Research Committee, have been published. MPA fourth-semester students writing a dissertation must comply with the prescribed structure and formatting requirements before submitting their proposal for the viva voce examination.


Chairperson

Research Committee

DISSERTATION PROPOSAL WRITING GUIDELINES AND STRUCTURE



Master of Public Administration (MPA) Program

Public Administration Campus

Faculty of Management

Tribhuvan University



Research Committee
Public Administration Campus
Balkhu, Kathmandu

Dissertation Proposal Writing Guidelines and Structure

Background

These Dissertation Proposal Writing Guidelines and Structure have been prepared to assist Master's level students in organizing and writing a dissertation proposal (the terms thesis and dissertation are used at the Master's and PhD levels, respectively, in several universities and disciplines, and these guidelines use 'dissertation' to comply with the guidelines of the Faculty of Management). It aims to assist students in fulfilling academic standards, minimum requirements, and the physical format of the proposal, thereby improving the quality of the dissertation. Further, it provides students with the basic considerations, components, and structure for preparing a proposal for those seeking to write a dissertation in the Master of Public Administration (MPA) program under the Faculty of Management (FoM), Tribhuvan University.

Proposal Writing Guidelines

As a plan of action, evidence of ability to carry out the research, and justification for the proposed research, a dissertation proposal is typically structured to logically present a specific title, research problem, focused questions, a theoretical framework, methods, and analytical tools that meet the basic norms and standards of scholarly writing. The dissertation proposal demonstrates students' knowledge and understanding of the relevant literature, research methodology, and the academic writing skills necessary to complete the dissertation. Similarly, once approved, the proposal serves as the guidelines for the entire research process, as the primary criterion for evaluating the quality of the dissertation. Therefore, a high-quality proposal is the basis for the successful completion of a dissertation.

The preparation of a proposal begins with a research interest, a focused area of personal interest, and a title that has not been thoroughly researched before, which raises an unanswered question in the literature. The title should reflect what is being studied, be core-focused, and be as short as possible, avoiding abbreviations and non-essential phrases like "A Study on..." "A Case Study of..." "An Analysis of..." Students must assess the feasibility, significance to their field of study, access to data, and manageability within the time frame, and ensure that the proposed research



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significantly contributes new knowledge to a particular field of public administration.

Furthermore, preparing a proposal requires careful consideration of research designs and methods, compliance with institutional norms and requirements, social and cultural contexts, and ethical considerations while conducting research on sensitive issues. Prior to finalizing the proposal, students are suggested and encouraged to review credible theoretical and methodological literature to acquire knowledge to frame problem statement and research questions, familiar with correct state of empirical studies, choose appropriate research designs and methods that directly align with research questions; prospect participants, and collection and analysis of data, as once it is approved it serves the guidelines to complete the dissertation.

Structure

The structure and format of a dissertation proposal differ across disciplines, academic institutions, and departments. Students must comply with the requirements and guidelines described in the subsequent sections.

1. Background of the Study

Background of the study describes the context of the study and orients the readers to the research topic, problem and focus. The background information should be directly related and relevant to the research.

2. Problem Statement

The main purpose of a problem statement is to define the specific research problem that logically leads to the research questions and guides the entire study. To develop specific research questions, students must review relevant literature to identify research gaps, define the research problem, and formulate focused, answerable questions. Similarly, students are required to define a general research problem (a broad question) and then narrow it down to specific research questions.

3. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study should be derived from the research questions and must align directly with the research design and methods. The general rule for formulating objectives is to use an infinitive phrase with the right action verb that precisely conveys the nature of the study and what the study intends to attain. Students must



specify the general objective and specific objectives of the study, aligning with the general research problem and specific research questions, respectively.

4. Hypothesis (if any)

A hypothesis is a specific, testable prediction of the relationship between two or more variables that must align with the research questions. In an academically rigorous study, the hypotheses are logically derived from the theoretical framework or are grounded in the existing literature. Note that hypotheses are not required for all types of studies.

5. Rationale of the Study

The rationale for the study must present the arguments for the need and contributions of the study, including why it is relevant to academics and researchers, how it advances new knowledge in the field, and how the findings inform existing policies and practices.

6. Literature Review

A brief and focused review of the literature is required to familiarize oneself with the recent theoretical and empirical literature in defining the research problem, formulating research questions, building the theoretical and conceptual framework, and justifying an appropriate research design and method. The review must be confined to the topic, problem statement, research questions, and other directly related concepts in the study, and must be divided into appropriate headings and subheadings. Similarly, if the proposal involves investigating factors that influence a dependent variable or examining relationships among independent and dependent variables, the students must develop a conceptual framework that explicitly illustrates those relationships. The literature review must inform readers of the gaps in existing knowledge of the phenomenon the student intends to investigate.

7. Research Methodology

Research methodology describes and justifies the systematic procedures for carrying out the study, primarily the research design, population, and sampling, nature and sources of data, data collection instruments, and analytical tools. The methodology section typically contains the following sub-sections.



7. 1 Research Design

As a framework for data collection and analysis, select and justify a research design that aligns with the nature of the study and is appropriate for answering the research questions.

7. 2 Population and Sampling

Define the target research population. Specify and justify the sample size (the number of respondents) and the sampling method and technique (how respondents will be selected).

7. 3 Nature and Sources of Data

Specify and justify the type of data (qualitative, quantitative, or both) and the sources of data (primary, secondary, or both) suitable to answer research questions.

7.4 Data Collection Method

Students must specify the data collection method(s) and the specific tool(s) to be employed, and describe the instrumentation to be used for both quantitative and qualitative data.

7.5 Validity and Reliability

Students must describe the measures to be adopted to ensure the validity and reliability of the instruments and the research findings.

7. 6 Methods of Analysis

The data analysis method must align with and be appropriate for answering the research questions and the research design. When both quantitative and qualitative data are collected, specify the distinct analytical methods for each data type.

7. 7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics guide the researcher's behavior and decisions throughout the research process. As with many professions, researchers must adhere to ethical values, norms, and standards for scholarly work. Scientific misconduct and research fraud, such as plagiarism, data distortion, and the falsification of findings, as well as violations of research norms and respondents' rights, are strictly prohibited. In the dissertation proposal, students must explicitly specify how they will ensure ethical conduct and integrity.



8. Organization of the Dissertation

Although the dissertation is divided into five chapters according to the prescribed FoM format, students must briefly outline the major components of each chapter in their proposal.

References

The heading "References" is centered at the top of a new page, and reference list entries are listed alphabetically by the surname of the author(s) without bullets or numbering. Students must include all elements, namely, author(s), date, title, and source, to provide complete information about each cited source. Students must follow APA style in in-text citations and references. Students are advised to visit the website <https://apastyle.apa.org/> for guidance on citing and preparing a reference list for various types of sources.

Appendix (if any)

The dissertation proposal typically does not require an appendix. However, students may include appendix (es) as supporting materials that are too detailed or not appropriate for the main body of the proposal. Students must label the appendix (e.g., Appendix-I ...) and give it an appropriate title.

Viva Voce and Evaluation of the Proposal

During the proposal viva voce, students are required to present and justify the proposal, focusing on the title, main problem, and research questions, objectives, theoretical/conceptual framework (if any), and methodology stipulated in the proposal. The research committee evaluates the appropriateness and feasibility of the title, research problem, and questions; the coherence among the research questions, the theoretical/conceptual framework (if any), the research design, and the methods; and the student's ability to complete the dissertation within a reasonable time frame. Students must revise their dissertation proposal based on the comments, suggestions, and feedback from the Research Committee during the viva. The revised proposal is approved and assigned a supervisor only when substantive comments and feedback are adequately addressed. If students fail to address substantive comments and feedback, they are not assigned a supervisor until they resubmit a revised proposal that adequately addresses those comments.



Suggestions for the Students

Preparing a dissertation proposal requires systematic planning, reading, writing, and rewriting. Students are suggested to begin by selecting an area of personal interest and conducting a thorough review of credible literature to identify a specific research title, research problem, and questions. Students must ensure a strong, logical connection between the title, research questions, the theoretical/conceptual framework, research design, methods, data collection, and analysis. Additionally, the proposal must comply with the prescribed requirements, formatting guidelines, and correspondence between in-text citations and reference list entries prior to submission for the viva voce examination. Students should keep in mind that research in public administration has unique features, including its multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary nature and its focus on solving real-world problems, which require distinct ways of formulating research questions and choosing methods.

