School of Visual and Performing Arts

Guidelines for Writing Academic Research Proposals, Dissertations and Theses in The School

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PREAMBLE

This working document is a general guide for students to write research proposals, projects, dissertations or theses. The document will also help supervisors in guiding postgraduate students in matters relating to research preparation, project, dissertation or thesis writing. In addition, the document explains ways of maintaining quality supervision. It also highlights how students register for graduate courses in the School and complete their courses within the stipulated time. This is only possible if the students and supervisors apply concerted effort within a guided framework. The framework has been described and elaborated in this document.

GUIDELINES FOR WRITING ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSALS, DISSERTATIONS AND THESES IN THE SCHOOL OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

1.0 SUPERVISION

Every department shall identify and allocate supervisors for its postgraduate students as follows:

i. Masters students undertaking projects can have a minimum of one and a maximum of two supervisors.
ii. Masters students undertaking theses can have a minimum of two and a maximum of three supervisors with justification by departments.
iii. PhD students can have a minimum of two and a maximum of three supervisors with justification by departments.

One of the supervisors shall be from Kenyatta University with expertise in the area of the study.

A supervisor may be drawn from outside the department, school or even the university, in which case, the Board of Postgraduate Studies (BPS) must certify that he or she is competent in the candidate's area of study upon submission of his/her current curriculum vitae. Additionally, online supervisors may be used as long as there is formal recognition from the host university.

1.1 Responsibilities of Supervisors

As principal resource persons to the students, supervisors shall:
- be available for consultation at least once per month.
- give feedback to the student within agreed timeframes.
- guide the student to relevant literature and their sources.
- ensure the student develops and writes focused researchable topic.
- ensure that the student writes clear and precise statement of the problem.
- ensure that the student works within the guidelines, specified in this document.
- ensure the student follows correct organization format, including conventionally written references including in-text citation.
- ensure that the student develops correct academic argumentation.
- ensure that the student demonstrates the use of scholarly language.
- not allow plagiarism.
- link students to researchers working in related fields.
- discuss and critically evaluate the student's findings and ideas.
- advise candidates on the form and structure of proposal, project or thesis.
- 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 on the progress of a student's studies are submitted as required by university regulations.
- ensure that a student presents at seminars/exhibitions or performs at relevant fora.
- guide/provide leadership towards developing publications (supervisors to co-publish at least once with their students)

In the absence of feedback from a supervisor substantially, arrangements must be made by the Chairman of Department to ensure continuity in supervision by identifying a suitable replacement (Rules of Graduate School regarding the replacement of a supervisor shall apply).

By placing his/her signature on the declaration page of the proposal/project/thesis, a supervisor will certify that the proposal/thesis represents the work of the candidate that was carried out under his/her supervision and is ready for official examination.

1.2 Responsibilities of the Student

- Give feedback to their supervisors.
- Refer to relevant literature and sources.
- Enhance the quality of their work.
- Ensure their written reports are submitted to their supervisors.
- Devote an appropriate amount of time and energy towards achieving academic excellence and earning the advanced degree.
- Be aware of time constraints and other demands imposed on supervisors.
- Take the initiative in asking questions that promote understanding in the research area.
- Communicate regularly with supervisors, especially in matters related to research and progress within the university's graduate program.
- Request for regular meetings with the supervisors to establish progress.
- Present supervisors with tracking forms for signing after every meeting

1.3 Key Terminologies

For purposes of clarity in this document, the following words assume the meaning ascribed to them:

- Concept Paper – It is a brief overview of what an intended study shall entail. This includes a topic showing the genesis and context of the identified problem; exploration of what other scholars have expressed; indication of a research problem, envisaged solutions and what the study will contribute to knowledge.

- Proposal Abstract – It is an overview of the entire proposal including rephrased title of the study and succinctly expressed background of the study, problem, objectives, and methodological procedures.

- Thesis Abstract – It is an overview of the entire thesis including rephrased title of the study, tersely explained background to the study, statement of the problem, objectives, theoretical and methodological approaches, major findings and recommendations.

- Proposal – It is a concise plan of a projected study that includes the title of the study, a brief background of the study, statement of the problem, objectives, research questions, theoretical framework, detailed review of related literature and methodology.

- Thesis – It is a comprehensively written document which is a culmination of a research study that includes the title of the study, background to the study, statement of the problem, review of related literature, objectives, methodology, major findings, recommendations and contribution to knowledge. A thesis is an argument that should be consistently presented throughout the various sections of the research study.

- Project – A practically/creative oriented study through exhibitions, performances, documentation, musical composition, theatre or film production. Additionally, there shall be an accompanying written report examinable at Masters or doctoral level. A project can also be a written work in the format of a thesis but accorded less time for field research.

- Presentation – It is an examination that includes mounting an oral presentation of an exhibition/performance/documentation of related processes by a candidate to a Board of Examiners. Students undertaking projects shall mount an oral presentation during or after the work has been examined before a board of examiners at the school level.

- Defence – It is a summarized oral/interactive presentation of a comprehensive research study by a candidate to a Board of Examiners carried out at both Masters and Doctoral levels.

2.0 FORMAT OF PRELIMINARY PAGES OF A PROPOSAL

2.1 Cover Page

- This page should not be paginated
- All sentences should be single-spaced and in uppercase.
- The title on the cover page should be bold and in font size is 14. Items will be arranged in the following sequence:
  - The title - Should be focused, informative and not more than 20 words.
  - Full name of student followed by highest qualification in standard abbreviation in brackets.
  - Registration number should appear below the student's name.
  - A cover page should not have the university logo as this is reserved for official university documents only.
  - Then followed by the following writing:

For Masters,

Proposal,
A Research Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Arts etc.) in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

Project,
A Project Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Arts, etc.) in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

After Defence,
A Research Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Art, etc.) in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

A Creative Project Report Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Arts, etc.) in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

For PhD, Thesis,

A Research Proposal Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of the Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

For PhD Project,

A Project Proposal Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University."

After Defence,
A Thesis Submitted in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

A Project Report Submitted in fulfilment of the Requirements for the Award of Doctor of Philosophy Degree in the School of Visual and Performing Arts of Kenyatta University.

Month and year of submission (centred) comes immediately afterwards.

2.2 Student Declaration Page

This page should have the following writings in Font 12 (Times New Roman): "This Proposal is my original work and has not been presented for award of a degree in any other university." Then the Student signs below his/her name with registration number in brackets followed by the date.

Example: Name: A. N. Other (M66/201023/2010)
Signature:_____
Date:_____

Supervisors: This Proposal has been submitted for review with our approval as University Supervisors. Then each supervisor signs after his name and department then followed by the date.

Example: Prof. A. N. Other
Department of Art and Design, Kenyatta University
Signature_____
Date:_____

2.3 Table of Content

The table of content should capture main tittles and subtitles (up to three levels) in the text (proposal/thesis/project report).

The table of content, list of tables/list of plates/music scores and list of figures need to be computer-generated and listed sequentially.

2.4 Abbreviations and Acronyms

A list of abbreviations and acronyms may be included in the proposal and thesis/project report if there are acronyms/abbreviations in the text.

2.5 Operational Definition of Terms

These refer to terminologies as used within the context of the document and are not generated from regular dictionary. These should come immediately after the abbreviations and acronyms.

2.6 Abstract

A proposal/project report/thesis must have an abstract, which is an overview of the entire document.

An abstract should:
- not exceed 500 words.
- be single-spaced and not paragraphed.
- contain no citation.

It is the last item of the preliminary pages just before chapter one.

One of the supervisors shall be from Kenyatta University with expertise in the area of the study.

3.0 FORMAT OF THE MAIN BODY OF PROPOSAL

Each major section e.g. Introduction should start on a new page.

Note: Headings and subheadings of the main body of the proposal to follow as indicated below where applicable.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

It should start with an introduction, which specifies the subtitles of content covered.

1.1 Background to the Study (introduces subject area under study and current situation. It should be a brief presentation in continuous prose without subtitles but be divided by paragraphs).

1.2 Statement of the Problem (to be precise and focused. It should state the lacuna in knowledge that the study seeks to fill and how it will do so).

1.3 Objectives of Study (SMART - specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound; and preferably not exceeding four objectives).

1.4 Research Questions/Hypotheses/Assumptions (where applicable)

1.5 Rationale and Significance/Justification (to explain the benefits and the beneficiaries of the findings of the study.

1.6 Delimitation/Scope of the Study (Scope gives the extent to which the study will be carried out. Delimitation indicates what may not be included in the study).

1.7 Limitations (Anticipated/experienced shortcomings).

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL/CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Review of Related Literature

- This section should start with an introduction which specifies the subtitles of content covered.
- Literature review should address the specific objectives or objective of the study.

- 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 and objectives.
- The literature review should be properly cited, paraphrased and critiqued.
- Endeavour to use current referred sources such as books, journals, periodicals, artworks, audio-visual material, scores and recordings as much as possible.
- The Literature review should have a summary of identified gaps.

Note: Within this section, the student should demonstrate evidence of understanding of current research on the subject under investigation and show clear gaps in knowledge that will be discussed.

2.2 Theoretical Framework
- The theoretical framework guiding the study should be discussed here.
- Identify the theory(ies) used.
- Identify the proponents of the theory(ies).
- Identify the specific tenets of the theory(ies) in the study.
- Show how the tenets identified are to be used in achieving the objectives of the study.
- Excess literature from the theoretical framework should be included in the review of related literature.

2.3 Conceptual Framework (Not Obligatory)
- Conceptual framework (explaining the variables and how they will be determined or measured)
- This is often in diagram form; explain it and relate it to the study.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY
The Methodology section should start with an introduction which specifies the subtitles of content covered. This chapter highlights methodological details appropriate to the study. They include:

3.1 Research Design (state the research method to be used and justify the chosen design).

3.2 The physical area of study (describe where the study will be located and why it was chosen)

3.3 Target/Accessible population (describe the accessible/target population

3.4 Sampling techniques (explain the sampling techniques used for the study)

3.5 Sample size (explain the sample size (unit of analysis) and explain how it will be determined)

3.6 Research instruments (justify the choice of instruments that will be used in the study and how they will be constructed as well as what they are meant to achieve)

3.7 Pre-testing/Pilot study (use relevant statistics techniques to conduct pretesting/piloting of instruments (where applicable)

3.8 Validity and Reliability (determine validity and reliability accordingly).

3.9 Data collection techniques (explain how data will be collected)

3.10 Data analysis (researcher should explain and justify procedure for analyzing data)

3.11 Logistical and ethical considerations

4.0 REFERENCES

Use American Psychological Association (APA) style of referencing both in the proposal and thesis/project report. This should apply to both in-text and reference citations.

5.0 APPENDICES

They will include such items as Work Plan, Budget, Maps, Interview Guides and Questionnaires. These must be numbered sequentially e.g. Appendix A, Appendix B and any other document deemed relevant for the reader to make reference to while reading the document.

4.0 PROPOSAL PRESENTATION DETAILS

4.1 Typing

4.1.1 All proposals in the School should be typed in font 12 (Times New Roman) on A4 size paper, 1.5 spacing, on one side of the page and based on British English.

4.1.2 Page Margins: Page margins will be as follows: left, 40 mm (1.5 inches) and all other sides 25 mm (1 inch);

4.1.3 Page numbering: e.g. 1, 2, 3, etc. should be top right or bottom centre and start on the INTRODUCTION page. All preliminary pages except cover page should have Roman numbering system (i.e. i, ii, iii, etc.) in a sequential manner.

4.1.4 Page numbers: The proposal should not exceed 20 pages for a Masters study and 30 pages for a PhD study, excluding references and appendices.

4.2 Oral Presentation

The recommended mode of oral presentation is the use of Power point. A maximum of (15 minutes) for Masters Presentation and (25 minutes) for PhD Presentations.

4.3 Tense

Future tense should be used in writing proposals, but this must be changed to past and/or present tense when writing thesis/project report. i.e., once the study is completed, simple present tense should be used. methodology section should be written in the past tense.

5.0 SUBMISSION OF A PROPOSAL TO SCHOOL OF VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES

Presentation of proposal should be subject to all relevant University processes.

6.0 PROGRESS REPORTS AND NOTICES OF THESIS SUBMISSION

All supervisors are expected to sign and endorse the progress and notice of submission forms. If however, a supervisor is not available, one supervisor's signature shall suffice, but names of the other supervisors must be written in their specified positions. A note on why any of them cannot sign must be attached. However, it is preferred that supervisors who are out of the country should write to confirm their approval. A copy of duly signed forms should also be left at the respective department for filing.

All students will be expected to submit their progress reports quarterly.

All students are required to submit their "notice of thesis submission" three months in advance of thesis submission. Failure to do so, the student will have to re-submit the thesis in accordance with the above-mentioned requirements/procedures.

7.0 THESIS/PROJECT REPORT FORMAT

The standard format shall comprise:

7.1 Title page
This page should read as explained in section 2.1 above.

7.2 Declaration Page
The beginning could differ according to what was undertaken e.g. project report, thesis followed by the declaration words: "This is my original work …" (As it is in the proposal).

7.3 Dedication statement
This should not exceed thirty words and should follow declaration, beginning on a separate page.

7.4 Acknowledgement
Should not exceed one page, should begin on a separate page, immediately after dedication.

7.5 Abstract
This should remain as it is in proposal except that this should capture major findings and pertinent recommendations.

7.6 Abbreviations/Acronyms
This section should remain as it appears in the proposal guidelines.

7.7 Table of Content
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 subheadings preferably computer generated.

7.8 List of Tables
This follows the table of contents, beginning on a separate page.
Numbering of tables should be: Table 1.1, 2.1, 3.1, etc., throughout the text depending on the chapters and be listed sequentially.

7.9 List of Plates

For directions, see section 7.11 below.

7.10 List of Figures

This immediately follows the list of tables and on a separate page. Numbering should be figure 1.1, 2.1, 3.1 etc. The name/title of the figure and source(s) should be written below it.

Note:
All tables, figures, diagrams and plates should fit within prescribed document margins.

Numbering of Chapter and subtitles in proposal/thesis should be based on Chapter numbers e.g. subtitles in chapter one should be numbered as 1.0, 1.1, 1.2, etc.

7.11 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 near the text, which refers to them. Each table in the text must have a number and caption. They should be numbered consecutively throughout the chapter using a decimal system i.e., the first table in chapter 2, for example, would be table 2.1, the second would be table 2.2, and so on. Tables and figures should not be numbered by sections in the chapter (e.g. 2.21). In numbering appendix figures and tables, use a separate appendix system and do not include them in the list of figures and tables.

7.11.1 Guidelines on tables and figures

- Place a table or figure immediately after the first mention of it in the text - on the same page if there is room, or on the following page.
- Tables or figures of peripheral importance to the text may be placed in an appendix.
- All tables and figures must be referred to in the text by number

(not by a phrase such as "the following table").

- If thesis has some aspects of colour in it, it should not be photocopied but printed.

- List and caption photographs as figures unless you wish to have a separate list of photographs or plates (adhere to ethical considerations).

- Headline should be in the inner margins.

- Each figure must have a caption that begins with the word "Figure" ("F" capitalized) and the figure number, followed by a brief description of the figure. This must be placed below the figure, with one blank line separating the bottom of the figure and the top of the caption as follows:

  Figure, chapter number, figure number, description e.g. Figure 4.3. Schematic of control system for the methanol-water column.

- Each table must have a caption that begins with the word "Table" ("T" capitalized) and the table number, followed by a brief description of the table. This must be placed above the table, with one blank line separating the bottom of the caption and the top of the table, e.g.:

  Table 3.2. Performance measures obtained using the proposed procedure.

  When a figure or table is continued to the following page, a continuation note (e.g., "Figure 5, cont." or "Table 5, cont.") must appear in place of the caption on the continuations. The original caption must not be repeated in this case.

8.0 THESIS CHAPTERS

The School of Visual and Performing Arts has two thesis structural formats that influence and determine the number of chapters and their content. These are as follows:

Option 1	Option 2

CHAPTER 1
Introduction
    • Background to the study
    • Statement of the problem
    • Objectives
    • Research questions/hypothesis/assumptions
    • Rationale and significance
    • Scope and limitations of the study
 	
CHAPTER 2
    • Review of related literature
    • Theoretical/conceptual framework
 	
CHAPTER 3
Methodology
 	
CHAPTER 4
Presentation and analysis of data
 	
CHAPTER 5
Interpretation and discussion of findings
 	
NB: Chapter 4 and 5 can be collapsed into one depending on the nature of the study.
 	
CHAPTER 6
Summary, conclusions and recommendations
	CHAPTER 1
	Introduction
	    • Background to the study
	    • Statement of the problem
	    • Objectives
	    • Research questions/hypothesis/ assumptions
	    • Rationale and significance
	    • Scope and limitation of the study
	    • Review of related literature and Theoretical/conceptual framework
	    • Research methodology
	
	CHAPTER 2, 3, 4 and 5 should be objective-based
	
	CHAPTER 6 – Summary, conclusions and recommendations

Chapters one to three have content and form as those described in the section for proposal but in more detail. Change the future tense to past tense where applicable.

9.0 FURTHER NOTES ON CHAPTER SIX: SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter should have a summary of findings. Besides conclusion and recommendations, the implication of findings should be explained here. It is in this chapter that additional research areas should be suggested as well as future projections based on the study.

The specific areas include:

9.1 Introduction
Introduce the chapter as done in the other chapters before.

9.2 Summary
A summary is a consolidation of the major findings of the study.

9.3 Conclusions
A summary of the implications of the main findings. Emphatic, strong conclusions based on the study findings should be stated here.

9.4 Recommendations for Policy/Practice
Salient recommendations based on findings, gaps identified by the study which would need further investigation through research should be given in this section.

10.0 SPECIFIC GUIDE FOR PROPOSAL REVIEWING

The following is the specific guide for reviewing proposals, which will be strictly followed. (Note that the information given is only a summary).

10.1 Title
- Appropriate/Researchable
- Focused
- Relevant
- Direct the reader to the problem

10.2 Introduction to the Study
- Background to the study should be clearly stated
- The problem and its peculiarity should be clearly shown and stated.
- Objectives, research questions should be well stated.
- Hypothesis/assumptions/questions should be well stated.
- Conceptual and/or theoretical framework should be well framed.
- Rationale/purpose/scope/delimitations of the study should be well framed

10.3 Review of Related Literature
- Ensure a consistent flow in the literature reviewed
- Use current and up-to-date literature
- Relevance of the content should be discernable.
- The review should identify the research gap(s) to be studied
- Current status of the research problem should come out clearly in this section.

Note: The student should be careful to avoid plagiarism.

10.4 Research Methodology
The following areas should be discussed convincingly and with supporting citations, where necessary. They must be presented in a way that gives

internal consistency and coherence:

10.4.1 Appropriateness of the entire methodology

10.4.2 Research design and location

10.4.3 Target population and sample size

10.4.4 Sampling techniques

10.4.5 Preparation of instruments including reliability and validity

10.4.6 Methods of data collection

10.4.7 Identification of variables

10.4.8 Methods of data analysis.

10.5 References

- Link references to the text.
- References must be accurate
- Variety of references should be used.
- Currently published material should be used as much as possible.
- Consistency in in-text citation and referencing as per recommended APA style.

10.6 Time-Schedule

- Should show practicability
- Should be realistic and include all activities undertaken during the period
- Should show distribution of activities
- Should show logical flow

10.7 Budget

- The budget should be itemized
- It should indicate appropriateness of the budget lines
- Budget should be done carefully to cover the whole study period.

11.0 SPECIFIC GUIDE FOR THESIS/PROJECT REVIEWING

Information in chapter 1-3 of the proposal remains the same except the future tense is changed to past/present tense as well as consolidating information, elaboration and streamlining of the chapters.

11.1 Chapter Four: Presentation and Analysis of Data

Emphasis should be laid on the following areas:

11.1.2 Data Presentation

This is presentation of data collected from both primary and secondary sources. The following areas should be clearly defined:
- Relevance to the objectives, research questions and hypothesis.
- Consistency in organization of format
- Documentation/cataloguing/quality of exhibitions/performance/ oral presentation/scoring

11.1.2 Data analysis

This is the making sense of the data presented in the previous section. Of interest in this section will be:
- Accuracy/precision/finesse/execution
- Originality (creativity)
- Use of appropriate statistical tools.
- Use of appropriate analytical tools
- Use of appropriate instruments/materials and tools
- Relevance to objectives and research questions/rejection or acceptance of hypotheses.

11.2 Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

The chapter should:
- address the objectives of the study
- Show ability to harmonize results with previous studies.
- Show insight in corroborating research information.
- Identify and examine emerging issues, novelty, ideas, trends, techniques etc.

11.3 Chapter 6: Summary, Conclusions and Recommendations

Emphasis should be on the following areas:

11.3.1 Summary
The student should summarize the major findings and their implications in the subject area.

11.3.2 Conclusions
The section should show logical flow of emergent arguments and the student is called upon to draw persuasive inferences.

11.3.3 Recommendations
The recommendations should be:
- derived from the study findings.
- realistic/implementable.
- Show that suggestions/opportunities for further research from the gaps were scientifically identified.

11.3.4 Referencing
- Use the latest edition of APA style of referencing.

12.0 CONCLUSION

We hope that this guide will be of value to both the students and supervisors. The guide is however subject to review from time to time depending on operation policies that may emerge at the Graduate School or at the School of Visual and Performing Arts.