

Guidelines for Research Proposal Writing for PhD and MPhil candidates – BoS Medicine

This is a brief guide to the candidates for the preparation of research project proposals in applying for registration from the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Ruhuna, for PhD/MPhil degrees, through the Board of Study in Medicine. This highlights the essential components of the research proposal.

1. Title : It should be concise but reflect the main aim of the research project. Avoid repeating the objective in the title.

2. Introduction: Should consist of three main components; background, literature review and justification

Background

- a) Provide a general overview of the study (i.e. biological, epidemiological, sociocultural, ecological and health care issues related to the study).
- b) Important terms used in the study should be defined.
- c) Clearly illustrate the statement of the problem and evidence should be provided to demonstrate the significance of the problem.

Literature Review

- a) A clear rationale for designing the study should be demonstrated by critically analyzing the current knowledge. Avoid giving a summary of what others have done. Should address the gaps in current knowledge.
- b) Demonstrate an understanding of theoretical concepts, and research and methodological approaches.
- c) State your research questions and research hypotheses. Check whether the research questions/hypotheses support the problem statement described in the background section.

Justification

- a) Clearly state why this research is important, what questions, problems and context does the research relate to and what you are ultimately trying to achieve or solve, and what benefits does the research promise and overall impact of the research findings in improving health of the people and the health care system.
- b) Should demonstrate that the research has a reasonable theoretical and applied significance and reasonable publication potential.

3. Objectives; General and specific

- a) Aims (what you hope to achieve at the end of the research, written in broad terms) and objectives (how you will achieve the aims) should be clearly stated.
- b) Objectives should be measurable, realistic and achievable.
- c) General objective should reflect the problem and scope of the study.
- d) Specific objectives should reflect the way the different aspects of the problem are addressed. (Although there is no firm agreement try to limit the number of specific objectives to 3 – 5)

4. Methodology

Should include the following items.

- a. Study type/design
- b. Study setting
- c. Study period
- d. Study population/s with, inclusion / exclusion criteria
- e. Calculation of sample size including how it was calculated
- f. Sampling techniques, method of recruitment
- g. Intervention, if there is any – describe briefly the proposed intervention and expected outcomes
- h. Study instruments- data collection tools: questionnaires etc.
- i. describe measurements and variables
- j. Describe data collection and data storage methods (who is involved in data collection, supervising and project management, their responsibilities/training needed/quality assurance of data or samples, including specimen transport and storage etc.) **Clearly indicate that the involvement of the applicant in data collection, and amount of work that the applicant is expected to do.**
- k. a reasonable plan for data analysis based on your research questions.

The methodology should be descriptive enough for the reviewers to assess the quantum of work proposed in the research project in applying for the proposed degree.

5. Ethical considerations

- a. Clearly state the ethical issues related to the project (research ethics and ethics related to using human and animal subjects) and what actions you will take to conduct an ethically sound research project.
- b. Should include drafts of permission letters/informed consent forms etc. in your proposal.
- c. State from where you will get the ethical clearance for your project (Note that if it is a clinical trial, the applicant need to register the research project at the clinical trial registry/Ministry of Health).

6. References

Use only one format and be consistent (refer the University of Ruhuna guidelines for references available at the Faculty of Graduate Studies, University of Ruhuna, Matara).

7. Gantt Chart

The Gantt chart should be a separate section at the end of the proposal.

8. Synopsis

A single page summary of the proposal (<500 words) should be included.

9. Instructions for format of the proposal to be submitted

The proposal should be word-processed and printed on both sides of A4-size paper.

Margins - 1 inch / 2.5 cm on all four sides

Font Style – Calibri

Font Size – 11

Line Spacing – 1.5

Number of Pages – Not less than 10 and not exceeding 20 pages, excluding annexes and list of references

Candidate should submit **3 hard copies** of the proposal (including all appendices) and **10 copies of the synopsis** (<500 words), a soft copy of the total proposal in PDF format as one single file (in the order of synopsis, research project proposal, references, appendices, Gantt chart) and the duly completed registration form with a photocopy and a covering letter submitted through the chief supervisor.

The research proposals should not contain names of the applicant or the supervisors. Include the title /running title as a footnote in the research proposal for identification purposes.