

# **A Guided Template for PROPOSAL WRITING in Social Science Discipline**

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**Abstract:** This book, with the title A Guided Template for Proposal Writing in Social Science Discipline, is a step-by-step guide to help students with proposal writing to get through their proposal defence. Generally, it contains the fundamental elements and nature of research which is important in proposal writing. This first edition will guide students to write proposals starting with a literature review through Chapters One, Two, and Three. Relevant explanations with examples are provided to help students understand the topics discussed.

**Keywords:** Social science, proposal, guide, literature review



A Guided Template for

# ACADEMIC PROPOSAL WRITING

in Social Science Discipline

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**UTHM**

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**PROPOSAL  
WRITING**  
in Social Science Discipline

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# *Dedication*

Highly grateful to  
God for the blessing.

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those who were involved directly and indirectly.

And last but not least,

this book is dedicated to  
all of those students  
who have just embarked into the academic world  
We hope this book will help enlighten your academic  
journey till the end.

Thank you.

# PREFACE

This book, with the title *A Guided Template for Proposal Writing in Social Science Discipline*, is a step-by-step guide to help students with proposal writing to get through their proposal defence. Generally, it contains the fundamental elements and nature of research which is important in proposal writing. This first edition will guide students to write proposals starting with a literature review through Chapters One, Two, and Three. Relevant explanations with examples are provided to help students understand the topics discussed.

Chapter one covers the basic knowledge about research, including the importance of research, the difference between scientific and social science research, types of research, and the scientific research process. Chapter two comprises the types of research design, including quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods. In addition, a simple mixed-method format is also attached in this chapter to give a clear picture of using the mixed-method approach.

The introduction to the research proposal is discussed in Chapter three. The discussion consists of the types of the research proposal, components of the research proposal, and the process of research proposal writing. In addition, for novice researchers, a checklist for research proposal development is attached as a guide in preparing a proposal. In the meantime, the novelty of the research is also explained in this chapter. Finally, chapter four in this edition covers the elements of an academic research proposal, including what students should know about proposal writing and the content of proposal writing guidelines.

Chapter five provides a picture of how to write a proposal. This chapter covers how to search and review the literature and investigates if the problem statement can be polished or determined from the literature. In the meantime, this chapter will guide step by step in preparing the literature review, highlighting the techniques of writing the literature review critically.

Before beginning to write, it is wise to read Chapter six as it explains most of the important parts of methodology, such as the development of the conceptual framework, types of variables, and population and sampling. Knowing all the important parts will help the process of proposal writing in a much smoother manner. In addition, Chapter seven provides several parts which would help complete the proposal writing itself. This chapter covers the research instruments and strategies for data collection, testing validity and reliability, statistical analysis, and parametric and non-parametric aspects.

Chapter eight covers a basic template for proposal writing which contains important elements in a proposal. Even though the components of a proposal depend on the institution, there will not be a huge difference in relation to the format. The last chapter provides information about plagiarism and introduces *Turnitin*, which is important to ensure that the proposal or thesis is not rejected. The difference between reference and bibliography is also explained in this chapter. Finally, this chapter shares some popular questions during proposal defence as a gift. The main intention of this set of questions is to help students be more knowledgeable while writing the proposal and consider it a checklist. Before concluding, this chapter provides a simple wrap-up for students as a reminder for their proposal writing process.



## CHAPTER 1

# INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH

### 1.0 INTRODUCTION

According to Collins International Dictionary, research is a systematic investigation to obtain facts or information about a subject. Meanwhile, Webster's Dictionary described research as a scientific investigation to uncover the facts. This module will explain the basic idea of research and its application. It outlines the planning for research proposal and grant before conducting the actual research.

### 1.1 WHAT IS RESEARCH?

In general, research can be defined as a systematic process of gathering or collecting information for further analysis in order to increase our understanding of the phenomenon being studied. The role of a researcher is to contribute to the understanding of the phenomenon under study and to communicate that understanding to others. In detailing the definition of research, Gall, Borg, and Gall (1996) described the systematic stages of conducting research works including the following:

- i. Identify research issues in which researchers find the research questions that are justified and feasible to study.
- ii. Develop a research proposal detailing the phases of the research process, including introductory, review of literature, research design, research method, data analysis, and other resources to complete the research.
- iii. Highlight that an initial study, also known as a pilot study, is necessary to gauge the requirement of the fundamental

## CHAPTER 2

# RESEARCH DESIGN

### 2.0 INTRODUCTION

Before beginning with research, researchers or students need to decide how to plan for the design of the study. The research design refers to the overall strategy that researchers choose to integrate, including the different components of the study coherently and logically, thereby ensuring researchers will effectively address the research problem; it constitutes the blueprint for the collection, measurement, and analysis of data. This chapter will begin by presenting the types of research so that researchers can better understand what to plan in the proposal writing.

### 2.1 TYPES OF RESEARCH DESIGN

In practice, there are different types of strategies that might be used for conducting the research. According to Sekaran (2006), research design can be defined as the action plan representing the details of how a study will be conducted. There are three research design approaches which are qualitative, quantitative and mixed-method.

The quantitative design uses objective measurements to produce numerical data typically analyzed using statistics. This design emphasizes the measurement and searches for relationships or correlations between variables. Usually, the quantitative design will be used when the researcher studies the treatment effect, identifies the difference, to survey, and to determine the relationship between variables.

Meanwhile, qualitative design refers to the studies that use non-numerical data or categories. This design provides data from text, video, photos, and transcriptions of conversations taken directly

## CHAPTER 3

# RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### 3.0 INTRODUCTION

In any research, funding is one of the important elements that moves the research. Therefore, it is important for any researcher to write a good research proposal to secure funds. Funding agencies expect researchers to put forward a proposal that is precise in detailing their description of study which includes information on past studies or research projects. This chapter will discuss more on the important matters that researchers and postgraduate students need to know about the research proposal.

### 3.1 WHAT IS A RESEARCH PROPOSAL?

At some stage in academic life, one will likely need to produce a research proposal. This could be for a bachelor's degree project, our master's thesis, Ph.D. research, or applying for a research grant from the funders. Planning and writing a research plan can be a challenging task for many, but after going through the learning process, this activity can become quite interesting and exciting. However, what is exactly research the proposal?

#### RESEARCH PROPOSAL?

According to the University of Illinois (2004), a research proposal is a request for the support of sponsored research, instruction, or extension of projects. Good proposals swiftly and easily answer the following questions:

## CHAPTER 4

# WRITING ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSAL

### 4.0 INTRODUCTION

The main purpose of a research proposal is to confirm that the researchers have conducted sufficient background study or preliminary analysis on the specific area of their choice. A proposal, however, is not a final blueprint, and there is a high possibility for it to change along the research process. Moreover, researchers cannot predict their findings as research may inevitably alter prior expectations. Thus, the content of this chapter is more on proposal writing preparation.

### 4.1 ELEMENTS IN ACADEMIC RESEARCH PROPOSAL

Once you register as a postgraduate student, you will be introduced to the terms Proposal, Proposal Defense, Pre viva, and Viva. You will be with all these terms until your graduation day, and if you decide to be an academician, of course, you will be with them forever.

In writing an academic research proposal, it is important to **convince the panel of examiners** who will evaluate your Master's or Ph.D.'s proposal by showing that the research has its **knowledge value**, which could **significantly contribute to the body of knowledge**. In this sense, a research proposal should spell out the research problem, sound theoretical framework, and appropriate method that have been identified to solve the problem within a realistic time and expenses.

It is important to determine the **purpose of the study** as this will have a significant effect on the outcome of the study, which refers

## CHAPTER 5

# START WITH LITERATURE REVIEW

### 5.0 INTRODUCTION

The postgraduate journey is not an easy task. Some might say it is like a nightmare, while some feel like a honeymoon. It is no longer a spoon-feeding phase but more on student-centred research that demands a full commitment from the student. The first time you see your potential supervisor, he or she may ask you, 'What are the topics that you are interested in?', 'What is the problem statement?', 'Which journals are you referring to?' and many more. This is a normal situation and what you should do is to answer all the questions confidently.

### 5.1 SEARCH AND REVIEW THE LITERATURE

The literature review is also called as LR. Have you heard about literature review during your undergraduate study? Some might say yes and vice versa. Once you register as a postgraduate student, these terms will keep playing at the back of your mind and even in your dream sometimes. So, what is the meaning of literature review, actually?

Literature review can be seen as a heart of your thesis either at Masters' or PhD level. Why? Because by studying and exploring literature review, postgraduate students will know what exactly they want to do, what is the best model or theory that can be used, the theory development, the right methodology to get the data and ways to analyse the data. In other words, by writing the literature review, students will be exposed to the overall aspects of the research involved and this can help them to discover the gap more comprehensively. Finally, students will be able to justify

## CHAPTER 6

# KNOWING YOUR METHODOLOGY

### 6.0 INTRODUCTION

After all the explanation, discussion and guidance there are still some elements that students should know as a basic in research and writing proposal. Knowing this part will help to get more understanding in preparing proposals for Proposal Defense Assessment. This chapter will explain, discuss and guide students or researchers on additional matters in proposal preparation.

### 6.1 HOW TO DESIGN A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In academic writing, there are three types of framework: theoretical framework, research framework, and conceptual framework. Every framework has its function in the study. Before we go into details about the conceptual framework, let us understand the difference between theoretical framework, research, and conceptual framework. The difference between the three frameworks is shown briefly in Table 6.1.

**Table 6.1:** The Differences among Variables

<i>Theoretical Framework</i>	<i>Research Framework</i>	<i>Conceptual Framework</i>
An existing theory/theory that is/are used in the research.	A research framework provides an underlying structure or model to support the research. In other words, a research framework is similar to the research design.	Refer to the development of the research structure studied, based on previous research, theories and findings.

## CHAPTER 7

# MIND JUMPER

### 7.0 INTRODUCTION

Before concluding, we bring this chapter which will explain more about Chapter Three of your proposal. This chapter will explain the instruments, scale and statistic, and statistical analysis with fruitful explanation, examples, and manual to ease the understanding of the topic discussed.

### 7.1 RESEARCH INSTRUMENT AND STRATEGIES FOR DATA COLLECTION

A Research Instrument is a tool used to collect, measure and analyse data related to the research conducted. Research Instrument usually will be written in Chapter Three of the proposal or thesis. These tools are most commonly used in social sciences and education to assess the community and society, such as students, teachers, teenagers, and consumers.

There are some differences in the instruments used in the qualitative and quantitative research design. In qualitative research, a researcher may use protocols, guides, and field notes to collect data. Meanwhile, in quantitative research, the questionnaire is the commonly used instrument in data collection. To obtain data, each strategy used has a specific ethic. Adherence to the ethics of data collection demonstrates the credibility of a researcher.

The research instrument used by the researcher depends on the data collection method and will be chosen after conceptualisation based on the units of analysis. There are several characteristics of a good research instrument to choose as follows:

## CHAPTER 8

# WRITE UP AND WRAP UP

### 8.0 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will wrap up all the discussions and explanations from the previous chapters. It also provides a basic proposal writing template as a guide for the novice researchers in academic writing and research activities. In addition, important matters such as Turnitin reports, and the differences between reference and bibliography will also be explained in this chapter. Interestingly, some popular questions during proposal defense will also be shared.

### 8.1 PROPOSAL WRITING TEMPLATE

There is no fixed standard template for writing a proposal. However, proposal writing has some crucial components that can lead researchers or students to do their research. There are many books out that explain how to write proposals, but humans with different competency levels need as much reference as possible to get a clear picture of the task.

A common proposal has three chapters, as we discussed earlier. As a student, you will have to remember all the components of Chapter One, Two, and Three as they are the basics of research or academic writing. Here, a template is shared to show the important parts and sub-parts that should be in a proposal. The example for each part has been explained in Chapter Four. The arrangement of some components might be slightly different according to a different school of thought.



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