

Guidelines for Research Proposal Writing for PhD and MPhil candidates Board of Study in Agriculture

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 Agriculture. 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 unnecessary wording.

2. Introduction: Should consists of three main components; background, literature review and justification with problem statement (1 page)

Background, Literature Review, Justification

- a. Provide a general overview of the study (i.e. biological, epidemiological, sociocultural, ecological and health care issued related to the study).
- b. 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.
- c. State your research questions and research hypotheses. Check whether the research questions/hypotheses support the problem statement described in the background section. Clearly illustrate the statement of the problem and evidence should be provided to demonstrate the significance of the problem.
- d. Important terms used in the study should be defined.

3. Objectives; General and specific

- a) General objective should reflect the problem and scope of the study.
- b) Objectives should be realistic and achievable.
- c) Specific objectives should reflect the way the different aspects of the problem are addressed. (Although there are no firm agreements try to limit the number of specific objectives to 3 – 5)

4. Methodology (1.5–2 pages)

Should include the following items.

- a. Study type/design
- b. Study setting, laboratory/field experiments
- c. Study instruments – equipment/instruments, data collection tools: questionnaires etc.
- d. Sample size including replication
- e. Sampling techniques and methods when applicable
- f. Measurements and variables
- g. Expected outcomes
- h. Study period

The methodology should be descriptive enough for the evaluators to understand the study for the proposed degree, before the proposal presentation.

5. Synopsis: Annexure 1

A single page Synopsis as requested in the Postgraduate Application by the Faculty of Graduate Studies (FGS) should be included.

6. References: Annexure 2

Include 10-15 highly related references (Please include all necessary references used in the text). Use only one format and be consistent.

7. Gantt Chart: Annexure 3

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

8. Ethical considerations: Annexure 4 (If applicable)

- a. Clearly state the ethical issues related to the project (research ethics and ethics related to using human and animal related subjects, including social studies) 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.

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 – 12

Line Spacing – 1.5

Number of Pages – Not exceeding 5 pages, **excluding** annexures

Candidate should submit **one hard copy (including annexures), and a soft copy** of the total proposal, including annexures, in PDF format as one single file (in the order of research project proposal and annexures) together with the duly completed **postgraduate registration application with all other necessary documents as stated by the FGS**, and a covering letter submitted through the Principle supervisor.