Guidelines for Writing Thesis / Project Report

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Professor, EEM Director, QEC
Foreword by the President, IoBM
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Basic Guidelines for Supervisors/Researchers

**Title:** A clear title, which briefly accurately and succinctly reflect the nature and kind of research. The number of words used in the title should be preferably limited to a maximum of 15 words.

**Abstract:** Though abstract is the very first page of the thesis, it is the last one to be written. Special attention must be given in writing an abstract, mainly because it is a very important component and the most widely read and quite often the only widely read part of the thesis. An abstract is the shop window that should give the reader an interesting and eye catching glimpse of the goods inside so that the reader must get tempted to know more. It ought to provide a summary of the entire work with a fusion of significant findings supported by data. The abstract must contain the title, purpose/objective, strategy/methods, notable findings, conclusions/recommendations and a sentence on food-for-thought. The total word count must remain within 1500 words. Sentences must be well connected and in good English. It is important to understand that improved spontaneously grammar improves the English, which also results in a reduced word count (by about 20 per cent).

**Introduction:** Importance and background of the research/study indicating the aspect of research, which makes it unique from other studies/project entailing relevant references. It is in fact an introduction to the subject matter of the research that ought to contain a succinct review of the academic literature entailing the aim of the research. In other words, it requires the researcher to contextualize the research. It is an important scene-setting chapter that needs to capture the interest of the reader and gives a clear sense of direction of the research. The introduction should explicitly provide objective(s) and (general/specific) as well as setting in of general and specific of the intended study.

**Review of Literature:** It is usually the longest Chapter in the thesis. The simplest ways /means of organizing this Chapter is to discuss them in chronological order. Subdivide the available literature into sections pertaining to various aspects of research. It is indeed a critical discussion of the academic literature related to the intended research/project.

**Materials and Methods:** This entails the practical way in which the whole research will be conducted, including the statistical tools that will be used to carry out statistical analysis. The use or derivation of any instrument to obtain data must be described. In case of questionnaire-based study, provide the field tested finalized questionnaires in the Appendix.

**Results and Discussion:** Presentation of results varies greatly, depending upon the nature and kind of data gathered. There may Tables, Charts, and Graphs of various sorts. Often the results may not be quantified, and results may comprise of trends and directions. While discussing the results the reader must be able to follow the researcher’s argument from the results to the conclusions. In so doing, the researcher compares his/her findings with other researcher’s findings providing relevant references.

**Conclusions and Recommendations:** It is the key Chapter because it draws together all the different strands/brands of research from literature and the empirical research. Draw conclusions and recommendations from the Chapter on Results and Discussion. One effective approach is to seek answers to research/project questions and comparative literature used in discussion.
Literature Cited: The supervisors/ researchers should have the options of using either Harvard system or APA style of referencing. Both of these formats are internationally recognized and ubiquitously used. One of the obvious advantage of APA style of referencing is that it takes less space in the reporting body whereas adding a new reference changes numbering sequence. On the other hand, one of the advantages of the Harvard system of referencing is that there is no difficulty in adding additional references and the sequence used in the Harvard style format can be easily serially numbered to convert into the APA style. It is important to note that in both the system when a reference author may have published more than one work in a single year and the researcher wishes to cite all these works, then this can be distinguished by the format: 1962a, 1962b, 1962 c and so on Samuel, 1962; Jones 1983; Didier 2012. A book is referred in the following manner: Shammas, N.K., and L.K. King. 2011. Water and Wastewater Engineering-Water Supply and Wastewater Removal.3rd. Ed. John Wiley & Sons, Inc. N. J. USA


Objectives: The list of verbs to be used can be summarized as follows: to discuss (an idea), to examine (a proposal), to analyze (some data), to synthesize (several ideas/or propositions), to explore(an issue), to reflect on (a theoretical mode), to investigate (a range of concepts) to propose (a possible exploratory to systemize (some initial data) to test (a hypothesis) etc.

Role of Supervisor: Following are some of the key role of the Supervisor: (a) Help students develop a detailed research proposal (b) Provide advice on research design, data collection, data collation and data analysis (c) Guide the student in writing of the thesis (d) Undertaking plagiarism check and keeping its record before signing the declaration statement (e) Suggesting potential examiners for viva voce examination (f) Advising student on the appropriate research training program or suggest undertaking of additional course/training to overcome deficiency. The relationship between student and the supervisor can be very rewarding. Perhaps the main thing about the supervisor is that the supervisors want their student to succeed.

Timeline of Research/Project Undertaking: At the time when the research proposal is developed, it is advisable that a timeline for completion of key stages in the process be set out before the start of the research work/project.

Person and Tense: Use of first person (I/we) and third person (he/she, it) must be invariably avoided. Use gender neutral language. Past tense is most often used unless you have empirical data in the form of narratives. Should you have a strong desire to write in first person (for whatever reason(s)), get your supervisor view before writing because first person gives writing a personalized and direct outlook? As a guidance, it is suggested to restrict writing in the past tense. Changes in tense, unless there are obvious reasons, make reading uncomfortable.

Grammatically Correct English Usage: Imperfect grammar can let down what might be good research. The improved grammar needs no further emphasis, but to highlight that improved use of English results in a reduced word count by nearly 20 per cent.

Quality to the Writing: In judging the writing, even people with little or no examining skills are able to distinguish between very good and very poor writing. Writing a thesis / project report provides a direct opportunity for students to develop effective writing skills. The skill for good writing involves incorporating ideas which convey clear messages. It requires organization, which means that the writing ought to have a logical structure, a personal tone and a flavor chosen by the writer. Effective writing involves a thoughtful approach to word choice, which entails right and appropriate vocabulary to get the message across. Good writing requires sentence fluency, proper structure, syntax, correct spelling and consistently right punctuation. High quality writing is a composite of analytical, creative,
critical and effective writing. As an example, regarding the Introduction (Chapter in thesis) there is a scope for making an early good impression by paying attention to (a) comparing the contributions by different researchers, (b) giving due emphasis to important aspects of the study/project and (c) use of quotation (without over use) to highlight key points. In so doing, adopt a structure to the writing that follows aforementioned three points which provides a synthesis by deriving a conceptual framework. Moreover, there is always a room for transformation from lower good to the best which lies in innovative/creative writing that does not require any emphasis. Use small grammatically correct sentences as opposed to long or overly long sentences, ones duly observing coherency and consistency. Likewise, very short paragraphs (three or fewer sentences) are common weakness in the thesis. Therefore, short paragraphs ought to be avoided because they break up the flow of narratives and gives a disjointed or disconnected feel to the writing. Furthermore, let it be reiterated and re-emphasized that the researcher should allow blossoming and nurturing aimed at achieving maturity in his/her own individuality in writing during the course of analytical and effective writing, this is a way forward for one to develop maturity in a accomplishing recognizable personal tone and flavor in writing. Such an inculcative and intrinsic achievement of high quality, effective writing and related knowledge-based skills would transform the students into proactive, effective, and efficient professional persons which is the ultimate cherished goal of IOBM.
Synopsis*

Title: Water consumption budget of household in a middle class household living in Karachi, Pakistan. Please give this study a good, short clearly understood title-be creative with your suggested title. All students should feel themselves as equally competent to give the intended study a title.

Introduction/Background: It should include the purpose of study. What specific data would be generated? As an example, the study on ‘Potable Water Consumption Budget Amongst Middle Income Households in Karachi, Pakistan’ one may have to find out as to whether the information is available for middle class households in Karachi? The usefulness of this study? In what ways this research will be beneficial to the planners, administrators and the study will greatly serve those who intend to implement a plan for sustainable potable water supply in Karachi. Where necessary give reference(s) for each specific aspect. You are encouraged to use references from published material. Include broad objective and note and provide any other objective under additional objective(s). In the standard format of synopsis, additional objectives have no place. However, at this stage it may be difficult to predict because of the absence of results (in actual scenario of submitting a synopsis for M.S./PhD level research one should write minimum broad objectives because the synopsis becomes the official referral document. However, keep in mind that when the data will be analyzed one may incorporate additional objective(s) already mentioned under objective(s). Include at least two to three references to support your intended research/ study.

Materials and Methods: Explain water measuring technique which each student is going to adapt and mention about the type of information you will be collecting, i.e., the questionnaire (please attach this questionnaire appendix to the synopsis). As against random sampling technique method this study will be based on actual measurement. At least each student should collate or replicate thrice to add credibility to the data (collect three times the measured data on household water budget).

   Statistical tools for analysis to be used (give reference):
   Timeline: A timeline for completion of key stages of the research work
   Statistical analysis, (graphs, bar diagram, etc.,)

Results and Discussion: Based on the results obtained, discussions will follow.

Conclusions and Recommendation:
FOOD-FOR-THOUGHT: Few creative/thought full sentences depicting the direction and usefulness of the research for the contemporary world (It is not a pre-requisite).

Literature Cited: Please give all references  (At this stage each student to provide a minimum of two to three references in Introduction/background.

*Synopsis or outline of research-a brief general outline of research
Institute of Business Management

Title of the Research Topic / Project Report

Student’s Name, ID #, Degree Program
Name of Supervisor, Highest Degree, Designation, Department, Affiliation

A thesis/project report submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy / MBA in ________________

Department / Faculty
Institute of Business Management, Korangi Creek, Karachi, Pakistan
Month / Year
Supplication

(Not obligatory/purely at the discretion of the researcher (student)
DEDICATION PAGE

(Not obligatory—purely at the discretion of the researcher (student)
Acknowledgements

This is the prerogative of the researcher (student) to whosoever he/she wants to acknowledge for thanks.
DECLARATION

(By the researcher (student)-obligatory)

(Obligatory Statement as a part of prerequisite declaration signed by the students along with the submission of the project or thesis as a part of the fulfillment of the requirement of the degree/diploma)

I---------------------------------------------Student ID number a student of----------------------------------------

------- do hereby solemnly declare that this project/thesis entitled’___________________________’,
submitted as a partial fulfillment of the degree of------------------------- is my original work and has
not been submitted in any version thereof for assessment in any other subject/university/institution and
shall not in future be submitted by me for obtaining any degree/diploma from other
university/institution. I also affirm that I have read, understood and signed the IoBM’s policy on
plagiarism (attached as annex N).

Signed and Dated
Place (signed)
Student’s name
ID No.
FORWARDING SHEET*

(From the supervisor-obligatory)

The thesis entitled______________________________________________________________

Submitted by Mr./Ms./Mrs.______________________________________________________

Student ID Number---------------------------------------------------------------------------------

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________________

towards the partial fulfillment of MBA degree in --------------------------------------------has been

completed under my guidance. I am satisfied with the quality of the student’s research work/project.

Signature

Name/Highest Degree/Designation/Department

Affiliation:

Place

Date

*Before signing this document, it is incumbent upon the supervisor to obtain a plagiarism check
through plagiarism software prescribed by the IOBM. Prior to forwarding the thesis/project report to
the External Examiner, the Supervisor must officially forward a copy of the plagiarism result and
document on “IoBM Policy on Plagiarism” duly signed by the student to the relevant Dean, Examination
Department and Registrar Office. The supervisor must ensure that these documents become a part of the
official record in his/her Departmental Office. In this regard, the supervisor must follow the official
policy of the IOBM which presently stipulates that the minimum requirement for thesis/project report
ought to have less than 19 (Nineteen) per cent plagiarism.
This thesis attached herewith entitled ,

___________________________________________________________________________________

___________________________________________________________________________________

______________________________

Submitted by : Mr./Ms./ Mrs.________________________________________

Identity Card Number____________________________________________________________________________

in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master in Business Management in

_______________________

is hereby accepted:

Viva Voce Committee

Dean, Faculty: (Signature/Name)

Chairman/Director (Department): (Signature/Name)

External Examiner : (Signature/Name/Department/University/Location)

Supervisor; (Signature/Department)

Member: (Signature/Name)

Rector: (free to join any viva voce examination

Dated;
Place/Address

Note: For PhD thesis, it is incumbent to complete Evaluation Performa as per HEC guideline before viva voce examination
ABBREVIATIONS
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Abstract---------------------------------------------------------------1

Chapter 1

1. Introduction / Background

1.1 Background
1.2 Scope of Study
1.3 Objectives of the Study
1.4 Hypothesis/Assumption

Amendments in titling sub heading allowed

Chapter II

2. Review of Literature

Sub heading of literature review as guided by the supervisor
Chapter III

3. Materials and Methods

In order to facilitate departments in Business and Social Sciences who do not or may not have any Materials or Instruments to report for the study may avail the option of titling this Chapter only as

Chapter III Methods

The Engineering and Sciences Departments though must have this Chapter title as 3. Materials and Methods and may sub title this Chapter as

A. Materials
B. Methods

Chapter IV

4. Results and Discussion

A. Results
B. Discussion

This is to facilitate the Supervisor and Researcher to either separately present Results and Discussion or keep both Results and Discussion under the same heading. Quite often researchers prefer to present data in Tabular / Chart/Graphical form(s) followed by discussion right underneath.
Chapter 5

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Conclusions
B. Recommendations

As noted above this Chapter may as well be sub-divided into Conclusions and Recommendations. The relative importance of both in thesis / project report under one Chapter needs no emphasis.

References/Bibliography/Literature Cited

The supervisors/researchers should have the option of using either Harvard Style or APA style of referencing. Both of these formats are internationally recognized and ubiquitously used. The referencing style while publishing in an internationally reputable scientific journal is always dictated by the journal which every researcher is obliged to adopt.

Appendices
# LIST OF TABLES

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ANNEXURES
ABSTRACT

(The total word count must remain within 1500 words)
IoBM’s Policy on Plagiarism

(EACH STUDENT SUBMITTING THESIS/PROJECT TOWARDS THE PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT OF POST GRADUATE DEGREE/PhD AT THE IOBM WILL SIGN THIS DOCUMENT BEFORE SIGNING OF FORWARDING DOCUMENT-ANNEX-F BY THE SUPERVISOR)

I………………………………………………………………. Student ID number_____________________________

Solemnly understand that I (he/she) have not been engaged in any form of plagiarism. Plagiarism includes copying published work without referencing, copying coursework essays/assignment/term report or submitting assignment done through hiring of ghost writer(s) for writing/solving the assignment(s) or submitting borrowed/copied or stolen assignment and claiming to be my own assignment/work including falsifying the results will be liable for penalization under the “IOBM POLICY ON PLAGIARISM”. Such act(s) when found substantiated will declare student as failed in that subject and may debar the student from award of the degree/diploma at any stage depending upon the severity and repetitiveness of the plagiarism’s incidents.

I confirm that I have read and understood the ‘IOBM POLICY ON PLAGIARISM’ and have fully understood what plagiarism is and equally importantly how to avoid it.

Signed___________________________________________
(Student’s name)_______________________________
Date_____________________________________________