



# **UNIVERSITY OF EMBU**

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SCHOOL OF PURE AND APPLIED SCIENCES (SPAS)

POLICY AND GUIDELINES ON PROPOSAL AND THESIS/PROJECT WRITING

SCHOOL BOARD OF POSTGRADUATE STUDIES (SPAS–BPS)

2025

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## Policy Statement

The policy and guidelines provide a framework for the various roles of supervisor(s) to a postgraduate(s). Further it outlines the format of writing proposals and theses/Projects for submission to BPS for examination and recommendation for award of postgraduate degree. The policy and guidelines are to ensure that University Standards and quality of research is adhered to for award of the respective postgraduate degree. It further ensures that there is uniformity of postgraduate research proposals and theses/projects across board.

## GENERAL INFORMATION

### 1.1 Supervision

Every department shall formulate and execute its own guidelines on the identification and allocation of supervisors.

In principle, every student will have a minimum of 2 and a maximum of 3 supervisors depending on need. At least one of the supervisors shall be from the department where the student is registered. In exceptional cases, more than 3 supervisors may be allowed, provided proper justification and approval from the office of the Dean SPAS.

A supervisor may be drawn from outside the department, school, or even 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 from the departmental BPS and School BPS recommendations.

### 1.2 Responsibility of a supervisor

As the principal resource person to the student, the supervisor's key responsibilities shall include, among others:

- i) Holding regular meetings with the student to guide, advice, and monitor the progress.
- ii) Facilitating timely submission of the student's documents.
- iii) Informing and advising BPS, through the chairman of the department and dean SPAS, if the student is not likely to reach the standard required for the award of a postgraduate degree.
- iv) Follow up with BPS on behalf of the student on the progress of the thesis/project examination.
- v) Assist the student in publishing the research findings in reputable journals as a co-author.

**Note:** In the absence of a supervisor for substantially long time, arrangement must be made by the chairman of the department to ensure continuity in supervision. This shall be done and communication done to BPS through the dean SPAS.

By placing his/her signature on the title page of the proposal or thesis/project, a supervisor is certifying that the proposal or thesis/project is adequate in form and content and is ready for examination.

### 1.3 Role of SPAS-BPS

Proposals shall be developed and reviewed extensively at the departmental level. At the school level, the BPS shall mainly be concerned with:

- i) Clearing and forwarding of proposal to university BPS, strictly adhering to the SPAS format.

- ii) Receive and forward progress reports.
- iii) Receive and forward notices of submission, endorse external examiners and recommend for appointment of examination board members by BPS.
- iv) Attend to other matters having a bearing on postgraduate studies and that lie within its mandate

## 2 PROPOSAL FORMAT

The list below shows the pages in each part; not all are required, but when used the sequence below must always be followed:

1. Pre-text pages
  - Cover Page
  - Declaration page
  - Table of Contents
  - List of Tables (if used)
  - List of Figures (if used)
  - List of Plates (if used)
  - List of Schemes (if used)
  - List of Appendices (if used)
  - List of Abbreviations/Acronyms (if used)
  - Abstract
2. Body of text (Chapters)
3. References
4. Appendices

### 2.1 Cover page

The page should not be paginated. All wording should be single-spaced, bolded in font 14 times new romans. The whole title page should be symmetrically arranged.

Items will be arranged in the following sequence.

- The title, in capital letters, shall not be more than 20 words. The title should, however be sufficiently descriptive to reflect the nature of the proposed work. The title shall be in font 14, times new romans, and in bold.
- The student's name shall be written in full (in the order, First, second, and surname).

A research proposal submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Science) of the University of Embu. This statement should appear in the middle of the page.

Month and the year at the bottom

### Declaration page

Use font Times New Roman, size 12 duly signed by candidate.

The declaration page shall contain the order indicated below:

- a) a signed declaration by the candidate with the following statement: “This research proposal is my original work and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award”.
- b) a signed declaration by each of the University supervisors with the following statement: “This research proposal has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors”.

Supervisors should be listed without numbering by their titles and first and last names, starting with the Main (lead) supervisor. Below, each supervisor should be a department or institution. The supervisor's job description (e.g., Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Research Scientist, etc.) **shall not be** included.

## 2.2 Abstract

All proposals must have an abstract, which is a brief overview of the proposal or thesis/project. It should not exceed one page (or 500 words), be single-spaced, and not paragraphed. The abstract should cover the background of the study, aim and objectives, methodology, data analysis, and study significance sequentially.

## 2.3 Acronyms and abbreviations

This section is to be included where possible and/or applicable. The meaning of abbreviations and acronyms shall be given or explained.

## 2.4 Format of the main body

Each major section, namely Introduction, Literature Review, Materials and Methods, References and Appendix (ces) should start on a separate page. The section title shall be centered and bolded.

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background

This section shall address how the intended research will build on what has already been done in the area. If the area of research is new or not explored as such, then this section shall address the relevant background to warrant the research. The background material shall strengthen arguments concerning the significance of the study and provide an overview of what is already known about the problem. It should also indicate how the proposed research will augment that knowledge. It should also serve as a demonstration of the student's command of current knowledge in the field.

### 1.2 Problem statement

The problem shall be clearly stated and adequate to justify the study. The problem should be stated so that its importance is apparent. The problem statement should be stated in a clear and achievable manner without ambiguity.

### 1.3 Research questions (Optional)

The research questions should be stated in the interrogative form. For example, *what is the relationship between rainfall and potato bright infections? Is there any relationship between improved soil fertility and abundance of soil nematodes?* The question must identify the independent and dependent variables.

#### 1.4 Hypothesis (Optional)

A hypothesis is a tentative prediction or explanation of the relationship between two or more variables. The hypotheses shall be stated in the Null form. It should be worded in simple, clear and concise language.

**Note:** The student shall not have both hypotheses and research questions.

#### 1.5 Objectives

##### 1.5.1 Overall/General objective(s)

This is a broad statement of what the research aims to achieve at the end. It (they) shall be stated in a manner that it (they) reflect(s) the title of proposed study

##### 1.5.2 Specific objectives

- The specific objectives shall be Specific, Measurable, Achievable and Realistic. They shall provide a clear criterion against which the proposed research shall be assessed.
- The expected number of specific objectives shall be **at least** two (2) for a master's student and three (3) for a PhD student.
- The specific objectives should be numbered in romans.

#### 1.6 Significance or Justification

This section shall include adequate justification for carrying out the research.

#### 1.7 Anticipated outcome (Optional)

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review involves identifying and searching for Information on a topic and developing a comprehensive picture of the state of knowledge on the topic. The literature review ascertains what is already known concerning the problem of interest. The breadth and depth of the literature review will depend on knowledge and level of study. The review shall be adequate in content and form to address the research and identify gaps the research is intended to fill.

## CHAPTER THREE

### MATERIALS AND METHODS

In this section, a detailed description of the study area shall be included as applicable where a field study is involved. Detailed description of the methods to be used should follow.

The research methods shall be adequately described, and the study objectives shall be covered comprehensively. Experimental and data collection procedures: This shall include detailed description of the processes for data collection.

## REFERENCES

All references cited in the document shall be given in full in this section.

In consultation with the main (lead) supervisor, the references shall be **consistently done** using an international standard format e.g APA, Harvard, ACS, Vancouver, etc.

The references should preferably be done using a reference tool/manager such as Mendeley or endnote for ease of editing.

## APPENDICES

This shall include, where applicable, such items as work plan, budget, maps, questionnaires, ethical approval etc. The appendices shall be numbered sequentially.

### 3. GENERAL RUBRICS FOR THE PROPOSALS

- 3.1. All research proposals in the school shall be typed in font 12 (Times New Roman) on A4 size paper and adequately spaced **Except for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics who are allowed to use latex.**
- 3.2. All page margins shall be:
  - i. Left - 4cm (1.5 inches)
  - ii. Right - 2.5 cm (1 inch)
  - iii. Top - 2.5 cm (1 inch)
  - iv. Bottom - 2.5 cm (1 inch)
- 3.3. Page numbering shall be at the bottom center. Numeric numbers shall be used from Chapter 1 section onwards. All preceding pages except cover page should have Roman Numbering System and at the bottom center starting from “ii” at the declaration page.
- 3.4. The proposal shall not exceed 20 pages for masters and Ph.D., (From Chapter one to Chapter three) excluding references and appendices.
- 3.5. Consistency on how paragraphing, headings and sub-headings, citations and referencing are done shall be maintained for the whole document.



#### **4. SUBMISSION OF PROPOSALS TO SPAS-BPS AND PROCESSING**

Prior to the submission of proposals to the school BPS by the chairman of department, students shall have defended their proposals in a seminar at the Departmental level and any suggested corrections/recommendations made. The proposals shall be discussed by the Departmental BPS, and minutes will be taken. If approved by the department, a soft (pdf) copy of a duly signed proposal with departmental minutes shall be forwarded to the Chairman, SBPS, for discussion at the SBPS meeting.

No proposal will be handled by the SBPS if not accompanied by the respective departmental representative. If the SBPS approves the proposal, the Dean shall forward the same with minutes to the University BPS.

#### **5. PROGRESS REPORTS AND NOTICES OF THESIS SUBMISSION**

##### **5.1 PROGRESS REPORTS**

All supervisors are expected to sign and endorse the students' progress reports and notices of submission. If a supervisor is not available, the available supervisors will be allowed to sign on their behalf. However, this should be accompanied by an email to the department authorizing them to sign. A copy of dully signed forms should also be left at the respective department for filling.

Summarized workplan showing the progress shall be attached

##### **5.2 NOTICES OF THESIS/PROJECT SUBMISSION**

The intent to submit thesis/project form shall be dully filled and signed as guided in 5.1.

Abstracts attached to the notices of thesis/project submission should not exceed one page, must be single- spaced and should bear the students name, registration number and the title of thesis/project.

#### **6. THESIS/PROJECT GUIDELINES**

##### **6.1 Project/thesis for examination format**

The thesis/project must be typed, spiral bound and submitted (six copies). It should be printed on one side.

The supervisors must all sign to indicate their approval that the thesis/project is adequate in form and content and ready for examination.

Dully filled and signed similarity report (obtained from the University Library) should be attached.

All other requirements from the university BPS should be adhered to before submission.

## 6.2 Hard bound thesis/project format

The thesis must be typed, bound in a hard black cover and submitted (four copies). Include a CD with the thesis/project in it and the name of the Candidate marked using a felt pen on the CD. The top cover page shall be printed in gold, bold, font 16 and centered.

Before printing the final four copies, refer the binding guidelines that will be provided by the University BPS after submission of the certificate of correction.

## 6.3 THESIS/PROJECT TYPING

The thesis/project shall be spaced adequately, font 12 Times Roman, on a standard A4 size paper, except for the Department of Mathematics and Statistics who are allowed to use latex.

All page margins shall be:

- i. Left - 4cm (1.5 inches)
- ii. Right - 2.5 cm (1 inch)
- iii. Top - 2.5 cm (1 inch)
- iv. Bottom - 2.5 cm (1 inch)

Referencing shall follow an acceptable and consistent style of presentation. However, whichever method is chosen, consistency in the whole document must be maintained. Note the style for heading and sub-headings and use of capital and lower cases, underlining (italics etc.). The major headings shall include:

### Preliminary pages

- Title page
- Declaration
- Dedication (Optional)
- Acknowledgement
- Table of contents
- List of figures (where applicable)
- List of Plates (where applicable)
- List of tables (where applicable)
- Abstract

## Main body

The thesis/project may take a thematic or classical format.

**A. For a thematic (paper) format, the content may follow the following outline:**

- CHAPTER ONE. Introduction
- CHAPTER TWO. Review of the Literature
- CHAPTER THREE.

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This will be the thematic areas describing the methods and the results by objectives.

- CHAPTER ---. General conclusions and recommendations/Synthesis.

Supplementary pages

- References
- Appendix (where applicable)

**B. The general content may follow the following guidelines where a thematic format is not used.**

- CHAPTER ONE. Introduction
- CHAPTER TWO. Review of the Literature
- CHAPTER THREE. Materials and methods
- CHAPTER FOUR. Results
- CHAPTER FIVE. Discussion
- CHAPTER SIX. Conclusion and recommendations.

Supplementary pages

- References
- Appendix (where applicable)

## 6.4 THE PRELIMINARY PAGES

The preliminary pages of the thesis/project should mirror the usual scholarly books.

**Title pages:** This indicates the title of the study, the author's name, the degree requirement being fulfilled, the name of the University awarding the degree, the date of submission of the proposal and the signing of the supervisors. The following is an applicable illustration.

**Title page Sample**

The page should not be paginated. All wording should be single-spaced, in font 14 times new roman, bolded and centered. The exception shall be the title and the month and year stipulated below. Items will be arranged in the following sequence.

- The title shall not be more than 20 words. The title should however be sufficiently descriptive to reflect the nature of the research work.
- The student’s order of names on cover page. First name, middle name and last name.
- The caption for the research work shall follow;

A Thesis/project submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the degree of (specify, e.g. Master of Science) of the University of Embu.

- The month and year of submission of thesis/project shall be indicated immediately after the above citation. It shall be adequately spaced from the citation and centered.

i) **Declaration page:** This should be written as:

“This research proposal is my original work and has not been presented elsewhere for a degree or any other award”

The student signs his/her name shown below:

Signature..... Date.....  
Nathaniel Kimunya Otieno  
Department of Biological Sciences  
EB37/2012/2022

All the supervisors then sign the thesis, starting with the main supervisor. Their positions at work e.g., Senior Lecturer, **should however not be included**. The citation shall be indicated before the supervisors’ names. The citation shall be

‘This research proposal has been submitted for examination with our approval as the University Supervisors’

The supervisors’ names and signatures shall follow the following illustration; There shall be no numbering of the supervisors.

**Example:**

Signature..... Date.....

- ii) **Dedication statement:** This should not exceed 25 words for master's thesis and 30 words for Ph. D. thesis. It should follow the declaration page beginning on a separate page.
- iii) **Acknowledgement:** The acknowledgement page gives the writer the opportunity to express appreciation to those who contributed to the completion of the research work. It should not exceed 200 words.
- iv) **Table of contents:** The table of contents outlines the major sections and subsections of thesis/project, indicating on which page the reader will find those sections of interest. This should be consistently done.
- v) **List of tables and figures:** The lists identify the numbers, title and page of the tables and figures as they appear in the text.
- vi) **List of Plates:** These are the lists of photographs taken (Optional)
- vii) **Abbreviations / acronyms:** This shall include informal and formal abbreviations and acronyms used.
- viii) **Abstract:** This summarizes the background, aim, methods, results and conclusions of the research. Refer to salient findings giving quantified values and pertinent Information that others can refer to and even cite the abstract for specific finding/Information. This shall be single spaced and not paragraphed. It shall not exceed 800 words.

#### 6.4 The main body

This should be presented in chapter format as follows. The department may change the format but the format shall be recommended for approval by the school. The BPS shall approve the format for adoption

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. **Background of the study:** This gives the specific gaps that were considered to be the root of the problem investigated.
- 1.2. **Problem statement:** This gives a more accurate approach to the issue being investigated. It should be very short and precise and should identify the main variables, which should be conceptually defined in the stages. It shall be a statement, only one paragraph of not more than 600 words
- 1.3. **Research questions (Optional):** Should relate to the hypothesis and objectives.
- 1.4. **Hypothesis:** Should be stated in an acceptable form, either null or alternative hypothesis.
- 1.5. **Objectives**
  - 1.5.1 General Objective-Should be related to the title
  - 1.5.2 Specific objectives –Should be closely linked to the research questions or/ and hypothesis. They should be adequate enough to cover content desirable for M.Sc. or Ph.D. work.
- 1.6. **Significance/Justification of Study:** This should give adequate justification of the study.
- 1.7. The department may wish to add more sub-topics to reflect desirable value addition of the work

## CHAPTER TWO LITERATURE REVIEW

A comprehensive literature review should be given. All relevant literature to each objective should be exhaustively cover ever objective of the study subheadings may sometimes be useful.

## CHAPTER THREE MATERIALS AND METHODS

This should cover the procedures you employed in your study. The method shall be adequately described but if the methods or apparatus have been adequately described previously in accessible books or journals, then references to these should be provided and only enough description given to identify the method. The chapter may include a full description of the study area (if a field observation study was done), the sampling designs, and ethical implications where applicable.

## CHAPTER FOUR RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, research findings are presented and discussed appropriately and adequately. The objectives and hypothesis are addressed to in as much as possible. The format of presentation shall be easy to follow and understand. In some cases, a department may wish to present results and discussion separately. This is acceptable as long as the thesis is adequate in content and form.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This section should address conclusions aligned to objectives. Recommendations and further work shall be included in this section. A department may wish to present conclusion and recommendations as two distinct chapters. This is acceptable as long as thesis shall be adequate in content and form.

### REFERENCES

This section shall contain all references cited in the text. It shall follow an acceptable standard format that is consistent, as agreed with the main supervisor.

Dean SPAS: Dr. Simba G. Nyamato.....Sign.....Date 02/04/2025.