Annex-1

RESEARCH PROPOSAL EVALUATION GUIDELINE
FOR MASTER STUDENTS[1]

BACKGROUND

The final year Students of Sociology/Anthropology are eminent and advantageous because they require writing a formal research proposal for their Dissertation. Further more the students from Department of Sociology and Anthropology (DOSA), Prithivi Narayan Campus get constructive feedback through Research Proposal Evaluation (RPE) process. The overall objective of the course of M.A. Sociology & Anthropology (T.U.) is to develop professional skills in the students. The course has adopted Dissertation Writing as a mandatory paper in the final year of masters program which is a key component to achieve the objective. The dissertation which is also termed as *student's research* is a significant and substantial learning activity to both students and their supervisors. Its purpose is to give masters students the opportunity to demonstrate their 'mastery' of the skills of designing proposal, conducting field work, collecting, coding, tabulating and analysis of first hand data. Such research quests enhance the expertise to the candidate and increase the stock of new knowledge on specific topic of respective discipline. Masters level research, therefore, a display of the student's ability to identify a topic, justify that topic, write clear aims and objectives which are interrelated, search the relevant literature, design data collection tools, apply those tools, manage the data collection and make sense of it. This may also include making conclusions and recommendations (Hart, 2005:6). Conducting an original and firsthand research is an opportunity for the students of Sociology/Anthropology at Masters Level to be trained in the field of social science research.

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[1] *This guideline was presented by Dr. B.K. Parajuli in a workshop organized by the department on May 2006. Faculties of the Sociology/Anthropology, PN Campus, Pokhara have been actively participated, discussed and finalized the guideline during the workshop. The editors of current issue are thankful to Dr. B.K. Parajuli and Mr. Damodar Tripathi for materializing this document.*

Students need to pass a long way to accomplish the thesis which starts from preparing research proposal regarding social or cultural problem or issue. The first rite of passage into the world of research is finding a topic for the dissertation. Then developing a set of research questions, propositions, possibly a hypothesis, with a clear statement of purpose and objectives are the next steps. By these student need to define what the research will be about, why it is needed and what kind of research it will be. Another step includes designing the research and reading the literature, is consideration of methodological issues-which is used to inform and shape the research. In short, in order to solve the problem or test the hypothesis they have to collect data doing field work, analyze them from certain perspective and draw a conclusion. While a sound *research proposal* is only a powerful tool to successfully accomplish the long journey of research project. A well designed proposal can go a long way toward shaping the final research report and will make it easier to progress at later research stages (Lock et al 2000)

The Department of Sociology & Anthropology, P.N. Campus, has adopted two strategies to strengthen the students' ability to prepare sound research proposal. One is to recommend students to follow the general outline of the research proposal which helps to get general overview of the thesis. And another is to suggest faculties to examine each research proposal based on certain indicators which help to find out the tentative credits of the proposal and provide some 'concrete' feed back to the students to take necessary action. Every student should try to prepare a written proposal and present it to his fellow students for feed back. Just writing your ideas down will help them to see how they can be improved and feedback in almost any form will help them to refine their plans (Schutt 2001). So the department aims to attain uniformity in both; organization and evaluation of research proposal.

OUTLINE OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL
Readymade list of research topic are not available for research students at MA level. Each of the students should develop and generate research

topic on the basis of his/her own efforts, experiences and intellectual thirst. Indeed a proposal must follow the realistic approach in her/his research. Personal interest of researcher, scientific method, availability of resources related with research, research ethics and based upon some theoretical frame are basic elements of realistic approach. The general outline of the research proposal that the department has adopted includes different headings and sub-headings. In short, the headings can be grouped into three major components or parts; introduction, literature review and methodology which are described in the following three paragraphs.

Introduction

An introductory statement of the research proposal in which you clarify what it is that you are interested in studying. It begins from topic and follows by many sub-components: i.e. research problem, need for the study (justification), research objective, research questions/hypothesis, limitations and conceptual framework. The *research problem* describes about the exact problems that the researcher has focused in his/her proposal.

Literature review

Review of literature provides tentative solution to the problem. It also reflect that the theory on which the study is supposed to based. The literature review has been divided into two sub-components; *theoretical review* and *review of previous studies*. The *theoretical review* helps to integrate the research problem to a theoretical perspective logically. It also helps to make clear about the theoretical position of the researcher regarding to delineate the research problem. Similarly, *review of previous studies* helps to bring out the previous studies and their findings related to the research problem or issues. Students should summarize the previous study and synthesize and they should mention why his/her problem is different from the study in its focus of interest and theoretical position. Proposal generally do not include a complete review as does the final report, hence the research students are highly recommended to conduct literature review in 3 different phases i.e. problem exploration stage, proposal writing stage and report writing stage.

Methodology

The third component of proposal is considered as backbone of a research proposal, which has been divided into five sub-components; *Study design, nature and sources of data, population and sample, data collection tools & technique,* and *method of analysis.* Besides these sub headings reference and annex are followed by methodology. Methodology is a plan and approach to tackle the problem. This part gives a clear picture how does the research begin and how does it end. So the research methodology determines the quality of the research results.

Student needs to follow the given outline while preparing the research proposal. Each component and sub-component of the proposal is important. So, explanation of each component and maintenance of relationship of one component to another are key points to see in evaluation.

Research Proposal Evaluation (RPE) Process and Tools

Research proposal evaluation (RPE) process starts when student submits two copies of the proposal at the department. Generally the process includes the following steps;

- Assign a faculty to evaluate the proposal
- Provide feedback
- Revise the proposal (first time)
- Conduct seminar and provide feedback
- Revise the proposal (second time)
- Acceptance of proposal and assigning research supervisor

Assigning more time to sketch out, drafting and redrafting your proposal gradually increase your research efficiency. As listed the process above, first, the chair of the research committee of the department forwards the proposal to a faculty with a *proposal evaluation rating form*[2] (See annex 1) and asks his/her evaluation including the overall strength and weakness

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[2] Research Students are highly encouraged to follow the *Proposal Evaluation Rating Form* while developing their own research proposal.

of the proposal in written form. Second, based on the evaluation the head will notice the feedback to the student. Third, the student need to revise the proposal (first time) based on the feed back and submit the revised proposal to the department. Forth, department will conduct an open seminar and student needs to defend her/his revised proposal. Department assigns external and internal experts (at least 3 experts) to evaluate the proposal and gets their feedbacks. They will use the *research proposal feed back form* (See annex 2) to evaluate the proposal and provide feedback. Fifth, the research committee of the department will again notice the feedback to the student second time based on the evaluation of the proposal by the experts during the seminar. The student needs to submit the revised / finalized proposal (second time) in the sixth stage of the proposal evaluation process. At last, if the student has successfully included the feedbacks from the experts the department will accept the proposal and assign a faculty as a research guide for six months of period. Then the student inters into other stages including the data collection and analysis of the *dissertation* following the instructions of their own dissertation supervisor or guide. In fact assembling of ideas, drafting and redrafting is not waste of time, but it increase the efficiency of a research student.

References

Hart, Cris, 2005. *Doing your Masters Dissertation,* Vistaar Publication, New Delhi.

Locke, Lawrence F., Waneen Wyrick Spirduso, and Stephen J Silverman 2000. Proposals that Work: A Guide for Planning dissertations and Grant Proposals, 4th ed. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage

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RESEARCH PROPOSAL RATING FORM

NAME OF THE CANDIDATE: _____ _____ Roll: _____   Date of Submission : ---------
TOPIC OF PROPOSED STUDY: _____   Grade of proposal: A / B / C / D

TOPIC :   YES NO NA

1. Does the title precisely identify the area of the problem? ___ ___ ___
2. Is the title clear, concise and descriptive enough to permit the study to be indexed in its proper category? ___ ___ ___
3. Are the key or principal words included in the title? ___ ___ ___

CHAPTER I.   INTRODUCTION   YES NO NA

4. Has a thorough analysis been made of all the facts and explanations that might possibly be related to the problem, and have the relationships between these factors been explored thoroughly? ___ ___ ___
5. Are you convinced that the problem is worthy of studying? ___ ___ ___
6. Are the arguments that were used to isolate the pertinent variables, explanations, and relationships related to the problem? ___ ___ ___
7. Does the statement of the problem encompass and agree with all the relevant facts, explanatory concepts, and relationships? ___ ___ ___
8. Are all the problem elements expressed in an orderly system of relationships? ___ ___ ___
9. Is the problem statement expressed succinctly and in an unambiguously manner? ___ ___ ___
10. If the study is descriptive, where the objectives or research questions clearly stated? ___ ___ ___
11. If the study is ex post facto or experimental, were the research hypotheses clearly stated? ___ ___ ___
12. Are the important variable and terms defined in clear and unequivocal language? ___ ___ ___
13. Are the more important variables and terms defined in clear and unequivocal language? ___ ___ ___
14. Are basic assumptions adequately described? ___ ___ ___
15. Are basic limitations adequately described? ___ ___ ___
16. Is there some indication of how the study will improve some problem area in the profession? ___ ___ ___

CHAPTER II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND RESEARCH   YES NO NA

17. Has a thorough review been made of the literature dealing with all the variables under investigation? ___ ___ ___
18. Have previous studies been tapped for relevant methodology and concepts and have they been evaluated to check whether their samples are adequate, their techniques satisfactory, and their conclusions warranted? ___ ___ ___
19. Has the background of the earlier studies been developed to show

that the existing evidence does not solve the immediate problem
adequately? ___ ___ ___
20. Does the review bring together pertinent data and theories and weave
them into a network of relationships that points up relevant issues,
reveals gaps in knowledge, and prepares the way for clarifying
research questions, objectives, or hypotheses? ___ ___ ___
21. In reporting the research of other scholars, did the researchers clearly
report:
    a.   Findings ___ ___ ___
    b.   Conclusions ___ ___ ___
    c.   Implications ___ ___ ___
22. Is there a relationship between the reported research and the proposed one?
23. In the review, did the researchers point out inconsistencies or conflicts in findings? ___ ___ ___
24. Did the researchers make it clear how the research reviewed relates
directly to the problem being investigated? ___ ___ ___

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY   YES NO NA

25. Did the researchers provide an extensive explanation so that the
listeners/readers could understand how they were going to
do the research? ___ ___ ___
26. Did the researchers describe the type of research to be conducted? ___ ___ ___
27. Did the researchers address the following:
    a. Population
    b. Sampling ___ ___ ___
28. In terms of instrument development, did the researchers address the following:
    a. Content validity
    b. Reliability ___ ___ ___
29. With respect to data collection, did the researchers address the following:
    a. Confidentiality ___ ___ ___
    b. Appropriate response rate ___ ___ ___
    c. Techniques for increasing response rate ___ ___ ___
    d. Non-respondents ___ ___ ___
30. If the research is quasi-experimental or experimental research, did the
researchers address threats to validity (internal and external)? ___ ___ ___

Overall Strengths: _____

Suggestions for improvement: _____

RESEARCH PROPOSAL FEEDBACK FORM

Name of the Candidate: --------------------------------- Roll/Regd #: -------- ---------

TOPIC OF THE STUDY: _____

Strong Points in Topic: _____

Suggestions to improve the Topic: _____

INTRODUCTION
Strengths:

1.

2.

3.

Suggestions for improvement:

1.

2.

3.

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE
Suggestions for improvement:
1.
2.
3.
Suggested readings/references/websites
1.
2.
3.
METHODOLOGY

Suggestions for improvement (Research design, population and sample size, instrument

development procedure, data collection, data analysis, and etc.)

1.