**School of Public Management and Administration**

**Research proposal in preparation of a research project**

**With the following proposed title**

**Name of candidate:**

**Student number:**

**Telephone number:**

**E-mail address:**

**Proposed degree (indicate with an X in the space applicable to your study)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Hons** |  |
| **M Admin** |  |
| **MPhil** |  |
| **MPA** |  |
| **PhD** |  |

**Purpose of submission (indicate the applicable option):**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Assignment** |  |
| **Re-submission** |  |
| **Supervisor allocation** |  |

**Declaration Regarding Plagiarism**

The School of Public Management and Administration emphasises integrity and ethical behaviour with regard to the preparation of all written proposals. Although the lecturer will provide you with information regarding reference techniques, as well as ways to avoid plagiarism, you also have a responsibility to fulfil in this regard. Should you at any time feel unsure about the requirements, you must consult the lecturer concerned before submitting an assignment.

You are guilty of plagiarism when you extract information from a book, article, web page or any other information source without acknowledging the source and pretend that it is your own work. This doesn’t only apply to cases where you quote verbatim, but also when you present someone else’s work in a somewhat amended (paraphrased) format or when you use someone else’s arguments or ideas without the necessary acknowledgement. You are also guilty of plagiarism if you copy and paste information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web site, e-mail message, electronic journal article, or CD ROM), even if you acknowledge the source.\*

You are not allowed to submit another student’s previous work as your own. You are furthermore not allowed to let anyone copy or use your work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own.

Students who are guilty of plagiarism will forfeit all credits for the work concerned. In addition, the matter will be referred to the Committee for Discipline (Students) for a ruling. Plagiarism is considered a serious violation of the University’s regulations and may lead to your suspension from the University. The University’s policy regarding plagiarism is available on the Internet at [*http://upetd.up.ac.za/authors/create/plagiarism/students.htm*](http://upetd.up.ac.za/authors/create/plagiarism/students.htm)*.*

For the period that you are a student at the School of Public Management and Administration, the following declaration must accompany **all** written work that is submitted for evaluation. No written work will be accepted unless the declaration has been completed and is included in the particular proposal.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| I (full names & surname): |  |
| Student number: |  |

**Declare the following:**

1. I understand what plagiarism entails and am aware of the University’s policy in this regard.

2. I declare that this proposal is my own, original work. Where someone else’s work was used (whether from a printed source, the Internet or any other source) due acknowledgement was given and reference was made according to departmental requirements.

3. I did not copy and paste any information directly from an electronic source (e.g., a web page, electronic journal article or CD ROM) into this document.

4. I did not make use of another student’s previous work and submitted it as my own.

5. I did not allow and will not allow anyone to copy my work with the intention of presenting it as his/her own work.

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| Signature |  | Date |

Your research proposal should have the following basic format (these basic outline instruction pages must not be submitted):

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Paper size | A4 |
| Font (body text) | Arial, 12pt |
| Line spacing (body text) | 1½ spacing |
| Language setting | Use the English (UK) settings in MS Word. |
| Tense | A research proposal is always future-directed. A proposal is, therefore, mostly written in the future tense (e.g., A non-probability convenience sampling approach will be used). There is one important exception to this rule! The literature review section, which reports on existing knowledge relevant to the proposed study, is written in the present tense (e.g., Wildavsky (2000:17) argues that …). |
| Margins | Normal |
| Heading numbering and format | As shown in document |
| Paragraph formatting | Paragraphs should be justified (i.e., the text should be aligned evenly along both the left and right margins to form a square box). |
| Page numbers |  |
| * Front page | None |
| * Table of Contents, List of Figures, List of tables | Roman numerals, small caps (e.g., i, ii, iii) |
| * Body of proposal, List of References, Appendices | Arabic numerals starting at 1 (e.g., 1, 2, 3) |
| Binding | Left top stapled |

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1. **INTRODUCTION**

In this section you should briefly (in 1 or 2 paragraphs) identify what the purpose of your study will be, what you intend to proof or what you intend to achieve through your study. This section should include a brief mention of the problem, the context within which the problem manifests and the intention of the study to address this chosen problem.

1. **ORIENTATION / CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK**

Your preliminary literature review should be a critical analysis of what has been written about your **independent variable** by various authors (research done about your topic by others). In this section you must provide a survey of literature/literature reviewed as a detailed analysis of the theoretical perspectives available for your topic. Explain if the survey of the literature showed that the proposed research is not a duplication of previous research, which implies that you will also need to refer to empirical research that has been done about the topic and what these studies found as well as how your study will build on or differ from previous research. If any indication of duplication was found, explain the type of duplication and indicate how the proposed research will differ from the previous research. It is NOT merely a list of sources or the name of each source with a brief description of what has been written. You should integrate the views of various authors to provide a solid literature background to your study and indicate the current gaps in knowledge that your research attempts to address.

E.g. if you are writing about procurement in the Department of Public Service and Administration (DPSA), then the literature review offers a theoretical perspective on procurement, where it comes from, why it is necessary, who is involved and the processes involved, its legislative environment as well as empirical research done on the topic in a similar context.

1. **PROBLEM STATEMENT**

In this section you offer proof that your topic is researchable. You identify the challenges related to your topic. You obtain proof from literature, including official documents such as annual reports, strategic plans and auditor general reports. The motivation describes the dependent variable in your research e.g. if you analyse the procurement process in the Department of Public Service and Administration, then your motivation should be about the conditions within the DPSA – its mandate, legislative framework, challenges as it pertains to procurement.

Formulate a clearly demarcated statement of the problem/topic of the research which you envisage.

Clearly identify the statement that will guide the study.

Your problem statement is a synthesis of how the information provided in your literature reviews serves as possible solution to your challenge described in your motivation. Your problem statement is a discussion of the current gap in knowledge and the extent to which your research will address the gap.

1. **CENTRAL THEORETICAL STATEMENTS AND/OR HYPOTHESIS**

The central theoretical statements and/or hypothesis will not be a reproduction of what was discussed in the Orientation section of the proposal, but rather the central theoretical positions derived from that theoretical discussion that serves as foundation to your study. This section will be presented as 3-5 bulleted statements.

The central theoretical statements or “Leading Theoretical Arguments” act as foundational arguments for the study and should be strongly supported/substantiated. These statements should be related to the **theory** (approach/ model) used as well as the **practice** (locus of study). It should thus support both variables in your title as well as your theoretical approach or position.

A hypothesis represents a declarative statement of the relations between two or more variables. Hypotheses are relevant to theoretical research and are typically used only in quantitative inquiry (statistical testing). When a writer states hypotheses, the reader is entitled to have an exposition of the theory that lead to them (and of the assumptions underlying the theory). Just as conclusions must be grounded in the data, hypotheses must be grounded in the theoretical framework.

1. **RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND QUESTIONS**

Remember that research (scientific inquiry) is meant to describe, explain and predict/propose. The objectives also serve as heading for your subsequent chapters, e.g. describe the environment within which procurement is implemented in the DPSA (as research objective) becomes Chapter 2 or 3: An environmental analysis of the implementation of procurement in the DPSA.

1. **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**
   1. **Approach/Method and design**

Describe which **approach and design** your study will follow. Detail why the approach is relevant and explain the advantages and disadvantages of the approach and design as it relates to your topic.

* Which? Qualitative or quantitative (must describe both and then state which one and why)
* Why?
* Define and discuss benefits and limitation as it will pertain

For example, your research objective could be to analyse the nature of absenteeism in a department, then your approach might be qualitative and you will use content analysis as a design choice.

Should your research objective be to assess the relationship between employee engagement and employee performance, your research approach might be quantitative and your design choice could be survey design.

**6.2 Population and sampling**

Identify your **population**. Describe your population (departmental information, number of people working there, their mandate and programmes etc.). If sampling is appropriate, explain which sampling technique will be used and why. If your research objectives lead you to use secondary sources (documents) as instruments in data collection, remember to also include theoretical sampling as your sampling technique.

**6.3 Instruments in data collection**

Indicate which **instruments** will be used in the collection of your data, including documents as sources of data. Describe why these instruments were chosen and identify their advantages and disadvantages.

Qualitative instruments could include unstructured interviews, participant observation, open-ended questionnaires or content analysis. Quantitative instruments could include structured interviews, structured questionnaires/surveys, structured observation or content analysis.

**6.4 Data analysis strategy**

* Data analysis strategy is based on your approach, design and methods you used in your data collection i.e. qualitative case study using documents as source of data may follow a thematic analysis strategy in presenting the data
* You need to define and describe the nature and relevance of your data analysis strategy

**6.5 Limitations and delimitations**

* Limitation and delimitations are related to your chosen methods and the way in which you demarcate your study. You need to provide information as to what the proposed limitations of your data collection methods may be as well as the delimitations pertaining to i.e. use of a case study (inability to generalise from a single case study to a whole population)

**6.6 Ethical implications**

* Every research has to acknowledge that their study will have ethical implications for participants, specifically if people are to be involved during the collection of data i.e. interviews, questionnaires, observation, focus groups
* It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that these participants are protected.
* You need to describe how you will protect your participants and ensure informed consent.

1. **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY**

The significance of the study has to address two questions. Firstly, what is the academic significance of the study? Secondly, what is the practical significance of the study? Academic significance speaks to the academic contribution the study will make to Public Administration as a discipline, while the practical significance speaks to the nature of the discipline as an applied discipline. Your significance should relate to your orientation, thus, your theoretical contribution to the body of knowledge

1. **PRELIMINARY FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH**

This section allows you to identify the content for each of the chapters that you will need to address your topic. Remember that your framework should correspond to the objectives identified for the research. Also remember that your framework is determined by the approach and design of your study.

Most research essays will comprise five/six chapters and there is a difference between qualitative and quantitative studies.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Qualitative studies | Quantitative studies |
| Chapter 1 Chapter 1: Introduction, orientation, problem statement, research objectives, research methodology, significance, framework and conclusion  Chapter 2: Conceptualisation of your topic within the Discipline of Public Administration - should use a descriptive heading for your chapter i.e. Theoretical framework supporting supply chain management in the Public Service   * + - This particular chapter will comprise two sections, namely a) locating the study in the discipline of Public Administration and b) reviewing the literature as it pertains to your chosen topic.   Chapter 3: Policy/legislative chapter  Chapter 4: Analysis and findings chapter  Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion  In qualitative studies, all chapters have descriptive headings and do not follow a prescribed structure | Chapter 1: Introduction and outline  Chapter 2: Literature review  Chapter 3: Research methodology  Chapter 4: Findings  Chapter 5: Recommendations and conclusion  Quantitative studies follow a prescribed structure as presented above.  When your study is a mixed methods study you should be led by the research objectives in making decisions as to how to present your chapters. |

The above should be written in paragraph format

**LIST OF REFERENCES**

Alphabetical list of the sources used in drafting the proposal. Include all sources consulted. Remember that if you used a source in for example the literature review in must be in the list of references. Ensure that you follow the Harvard method of referencing and be consistent. Detailed information available in the SPMA Referencing Guide.