Article 16: Components of a Research Proposal

16.1 Preliminary Section

16.1.1 Title

Research proposal title should demarcate the main focus/ or theme of the proposed study. The title should accurately reflect the scope and content of the study. In addition, it should be concise, simple and catchy in not more than 20 words. The title should be informative/descriptive yet discrete and contain the key words of the proposal. The selection and approval of the thesis title should be done as per ASTU Senate legislation.

16.1.2 Proposal Summary

It is a brief summary of consisting approximately 300 words (more or less). It should include the research objective, the rationale for the study, the hypothesis (if any) and method of the study. It should also be one page, one paragraph, single space and italic in format.

16.2 Introduction

This section includes the background information of the subject, statement of the problem, significance of the study and objectives of the study.

16.2.1 Background of the study:

In the background of the study, the researcher should:

- create reader interest in the topic,
- lay the broad foundation for the problem that leads to the study,
- place the study within the larger context of the scholarly literature, and
- reach out to a specific audience.

16.2.2 Statement of the Problem

- The problem statement describes the context for the study, and it also identifies the general analysis approach. It is important in a proposal that the problem stands-out that readers can easily recognize it.
- A problem statement should be presented within a context, and that context should be provided and briefly explained, including a discussion of the conceptual or theoretical framework in which it is embedded. It clearly identifies and explains the theoretical framework that undergirds the study.

16.2.3 Questions and/or Hypotheses (Optional)

- Questions are most often used in qualitative inquiry. Hypotheses are relevant to theoretical research and are generally used in quantitative inquiry. When a researcher states hypotheses, the reader is entitled to have an exposition of the theory that lead to them (and of the assumptions underlying the theory).
- A research question poses a relationship between two or more variables but phrases the relationship as a question; a hypothesis represents a declarative statement of the relations between two or more variables;
- Deciding whether to use questions or hypotheses depends on factors such as the purpose of the study, the nature of the design and methodology.

16.2.4 Significance of the Study

The significance section indicates how the researcher will refine, revise, or extend existing knowledge in the area under investigation. Such refinements, revisions, or extensions may have substantive, theoretical, or methodological significance. Practitioners and professional readers should be considered.

16.2.5 General and Specific Objectives

The general objective of a study states what the researcher expects to achieve by the study in general terms. The specific objectives are arising directly from the general objectives of the study. For each specific objective you must have a method to attempt to achieve it.

16.2.6 Delimitation/Scope (this component is field specific)

This section delimits the specific area of the research. Delimitation addresses how a study will be narrowed in scope—how it is bounded. This is the place to explain the things that the researcher is doing and why he/she has chosen not to do them—the literature he/she will not review (and why not), the population he/she is studying (and why not), the methodological procedures he/she will not use(and why he/she will not use them).

16.2.7 Operational Definitions (this component is field specific)

This section clearly identifies and defines the central concepts or ideas of the study. When defining terms, makes a judicious choice between using descriptive or operational definitions.

16.3 Literature Review

This section deals with the analysis of existing literature on the subject with the objective of revealing contributions, weaknesses and gaps. The literature review should be according to the themes of the study and should reflect the objectives, hypotheses, methods and research questions. The review of the literature provides the background and context for the research problem. The literature review helps relate the proposed study to the larger ongoing discourse in the literature about a phenomenon, filling in gaps in the literature and extending earlier studies. It should establish the need for the research and indicate that the writer is a knowledgeable about the area.

16.4 Materials and Methods (this component is field specific)

In this section the students should give clear, specific, appropriate and credible procedures that shall be followed to attain the proposed objectives of the study. The research design planned for use should be clearly stated. The research method should be appropriate to the problem area i.e. the statement of the problem, objective and hypothesis. The logistics of implementation should be viewed parallel to the choice of the research methodology and design.

16.4.1 Sampling (This component is field specific and optional)

Based on the nature of the field of specializations, the necessary sampling techniques and size should be identified and employed in consultation with advisor.

16.4.2 Data Collection

Outline the general plan for collecting the data. This may include administration procedures, interview or observation procedures. Include an explicit statement covering the field controls to be employed. Provide a general outline of the time schedule you expect to follow.

16.4.3 Data Analysis

The students should decide how the data generated will be analyzed. Descriptions of data analytical methods, techniques, tools and statistical tests that will be used should be provided. Software planed for use in statistical analysis may also mention (e.g., ethnography, SAS, SPSS, STATA and Others).

16.4.4 Ethical Consideration

Ethics of the research here refers to the morals of the investigation or intervention as regards the minimal abuse, disregard, safety, social and psychological well-being of the person, community and /or animals i.e., how the principles of consent, beneficence and justice are handled in the study. The researcher needs to include a statement where ethical clearance will be obtained.

16.5 Budget

This is the financial plan for implementation of the research. It should be clear, realistic and reasonable (affordable). It should be itemized according to the following: equipment, stationery, materials, per-diem, travel, research assistance, services (Secretarial, Photocopying, Printing, Binding, laboratory etc.), dissemination (Publishing, Conferences etc.), contingency 10%, and Others (Specify).

16.6 Time Framework/Work Plan

This is the schedule / time-table of activities covering the period over which the research is to be implemented with due regard to budgetary consideration. See the appendix.

16.7 References

This is a list of all works cited in the proposal and should be written according to the approved format. Citations shall not be less than 15 in the proposal and text books as a citations are not advisable. The format shall be according to field area of specialization.