GUIDELINES FOR THE
THESIS / DISSERTATION WRITING

2nd Edition

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1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines provide students with essential information about how to prepare and submit thesis and dissertations in a format acceptable to the Graduate School at Asia e University. As you begin the process of writing, you will be carefully documenting the research, theories, methods, results and conclusion of your efforts. A well-written and well-formatted work will reflect favourably upon you and Asia e University Graduate School. When completed, your thesis or dissertation must follow a format and style that are acceptable, consistent with your field of knowledge.

2. STRUCTURE OF THE POSTGRADUATE PROGRAMME

The postgraduate programmes offered by the University are categorised under three (3) structures as follows;

2.1 Structure I : Degree by Research (e.g.: PhD, MSc)
2.2 Structure II : Degree by Coursework and Research (e.g.: DBA)
2.3 Structure III : Degree by Coursework (e.g.: MBA, MM, MKM, MEd, MICTM)

3. THESIS, DISSERTATION AND PROJECT PAPER

A thesis, or a dissertation or a project paper represents the research component of the postgraduate programme.

At Asia e University, a thesis contributes to 100% fulfilment of the degree programme through original research under a proper academic supervision and in a research environment for a prescribed period. In scope, the PhD thesis differs from a research Master thesis mainly by its deeper and more comprehensive treatment of its content and subjects. The length of the PhD thesis varies with each discipline with 80,000 words being the norm. The PhD thesis should not exceed 100,000 words (excluding appendices) without special approval of the Dean, School of Graduate Studies. The length of a master thesis also varies with each discipline should not exceed 80,000 (excluding) without the approval of Dean, School of Graduate Studies. The thesis must be defended in an oral examination and/or viva voce examination.

A dissertation or a project paper contributes to a partial fulfilment of the postgraduate degree by research under a proper academic supervision and in a research environment for a prescribed period. Without the approval of Dean, School of Graduate Studies, the length of a doctoral dissertation and master dissertation should not exceed (excluding appendices) 80,000 and 60,000
words respectively. The length of a 3-credit project paper should not exceed 12,000 words (excluding appendices).

The thesis, or dissertation or project paper demonstrates authority in the candidate’s field and shows evidence of command of knowledge in relevant fields.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Thesis</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
<th>Project Paper</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fulfillment</td>
<td>Full</td>
<td>Partial</td>
<td>Partial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Length (PhD) (Master)</td>
<td>&lt; 100 K words</td>
<td>&lt; 80 K words</td>
<td>Business Administration: Around 12K words</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>&lt; 80K words</td>
<td>&lt; 60 K words</td>
<td>Education: Around 6K words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Purpose</td>
<td>Demonstrates authority in the candidate’s field and shows evidence of command of knowledge in relevant fields</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Est. time frame</td>
<td>9 semesters</td>
<td>6 semesters</td>
<td>1 – 2 semesters</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. **SUPERVISOR AND SUPERVISION**

**Dissertation / Thesis Supervision for Students under Structure I and II**

(1) **Advisor**

At the initial stage of the candidature, students are assigned an advisor from the respective school. The advisor role is to guide student in preparing the Intent of Research in the first semester of candidature.

*Intent of Research*

Before a supervisor can be appointed, a student needs to submit a 2-page of Intent of Research to SGS by indicating the following;
(i) proposed title and scope of study,
(ii) brief statements of research problems,
(iii) conceptual framework (e.g. the variables involved, methods used in brief)
(iv) reasons for undertaking the study (e.g. career enhancement, academic requirement, self-fulfilment)

(2) Supervisor

The School may assign a suitable supervisor after admission or the student may nominate his/her own supervisor by submitting a Nomination of Thesis Supervisor / Supervisory Committee Form (SGS 001) and the research prospectus.

A student with the advice of the Supervisor may nominate a Supervisory Committee (if required). If a Supervisory Committee is required, the student must complete and submit a Nomination of Thesis Supervisor / Supervisory Committee Form (SGS 001) to the School of Graduate Studies.

A Supervisory Committee must consist of a Chairman and at least one (1) other member who is capable of providing advice and guidance to the student’s research.

The Chairman of the Supervisory Committee may be the Supervisor or any other academic member appointed by the School.

(3) Additional Requirements for Appointment of Supervisor(s)

The nominated Supervisor / Supervisory Committee for Master’s student may also be one of the following person;

(i) An academic staff member who is a Doctoral degree holder; or
(ii) An academic staff member with the rank of a Lecturer with a Master’s degree qualification and has published his research; or
(iii) An individual with relevant postgraduate or professional qualification recognised by the University.

Whereas, Supervisor / Supervisory Committee for a student pursuing a Doctoral degree may be one of the following person;
(i) An academic staff member who is a Doctoral degree holder; or
(ii) An academic staff member who is a Professor / Associate Professor; or
(iii) An individual with relevant postgraduate or professional qualification recognised by the University.

(4) Restriction

A Supervisor or members of a Supervisory Committee shall not in any manner be personally related to the student who is under their supervision.

(5) Change of a Supervisor or Reconstitution of the Supervisory Committee

A student may seek the Dean to change the Supervisor or reconstitute the Supervisory Committee if he/she believes that continued supervision by the Supervisor/Supervisory Committee will not lead to the satisfactory completion of the degree.

(6) Progress Monitoring

Student is requested to discuss their research progress with their supervisor and submit a half-yearly progress report (SGS 002) by the first week of January and the first week of July. This is a part of monitoring process and the SGS shall act for improvement based on the progress analysis report.

5.0 PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT AND APPROVAL

(1) Requirement

During the Stage 1 of Structure I, the research proposal should be submitted within the stipulated period from date of registration of the first semester to the School of Graduate Studies.

For Structure II, a student is required to fulfil a minimum number of credit hours of coursework and examinations. Subject to the student’s performance in the coursework component, and the approval of Dean of School of
Management, a student is allowed to proceed work on his/her research proposal.

(2) **The Purpose of the Research Proposal**

The purpose of this proposal is to clearly set out the following:

(i) goals of the research study  
(ii) relationship of the work to the current body of knowledge in the chosen discipline area  
(iii) methodologies by which the goals will be addressed  
(iv) plausible outcomes of the work, together with their significance, and  
(v) candidate’s capabilities in conducting the research together with the timeline

(3) **Preparing the Research Proposal**

Candidates should conduct an initial literature search and review the existing literature concerned with content and methodology. This is the most critical activity before writing the research proposal. The better that your research is ‘grounded in’ or ‘tied to’ the literature, the greater will be its credibility, persuasiveness and authority.

Candidates are required to discuss with their supervisor or supervisory committee member(s) on the focus and purpose of the research proposal as stipulated above.

A doctoral research proposal should normally be around 10 000 words excluding appendices and references, whereas a proposal for Master degree programme (Structures I and II) normally comprises about 8 000 words.

For Structure III, a simple research proposal of about 300 words is required for Master programme by Coursework. This proposal should include the title, purpose(s) of research and methodology used.

(4) **Table of Content of Research Proposal**

The table of content for the research proposal shall consist of the following:

(i) **Synopsis**

This section is the ‘face’ of your proposal. It is written to give an overview of the context, purpose, objectives, justifications for research, expected results and what makes you think that the research will make a useful contribution to knowledge.

(ii) **Introduction**

(a) **Background of study**

Should arouse interest and convince the reader that the research is justifiable and the problem is worth researching.
(b) **Problem Statement**
This is a statement that clearly defines the 'problem' the intended study is going to answer. It has to be well framed - clear, precise, specific, measurable and attainable.

(iii) **Research Purpose and Objectives**
(a) **Research Purpose**
This section provides the focus of research. Researcher must state the purpose of the research, and it must be anyone or a combination of these – to explain, to explore, to predict or to describe.

(b) **Research Objectives**
The objectives detailed the reasons why the research is being carried out. It also provides the scope and parameters within which the study will be conducted. Objectives set must be SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time bound).

(c) **Justifications**
If in the ‘Background’ section you provide an ‘overall’ reason why the research is significant and merits a more detailed investigation, this section requires you to justify why the research is necessary in the context of the purpose and objectives you had stated above.

(iv) **Review of Literature**
(a) **Issues Addressed**
This is the first thing to identify in the literature review where need to identify areas or issues where they had not ventured into. If you are interested in an issue but other had done some work on it, then look for past findings that you can improve on and add new dimensions.

(b) **Methods Employed**
▪ Guiding theory(ies) used
▪ Conceptual frameworks used / approach adopted, variables used to represent the concepts being studied, scales and measurement used, how variables are being measured and major hypothesis being tested
▪ Data Collection instruments employed
▪ Respondents used in the study
▪ Sampling

(c) **Major Findings and Research Gaps Identified**

(v) **Research Method**
(a) Operational definitions of main concepts and variables to be used
(b) Guiding theory(ies) to be used as a basis of informing the research
(c) Conceptual frameworks to be used / approach to be adopted
(d) Variables used to represent the concepts being studied.
(e) Scope of the study.
(f) Major hypothesis being tested.
(g) Scales and measurements to be used and how variables are going to be being measured.
(h) Data Collection instruments to employed and data collection plans.
(i) Who are the respondents, how they are going to be selected how sampling is going to be done.
(j) Data analysis – how data is going to be analysed. This includes what statistical techniques are going to be used for data analysis and to test the validity and reliability of data and to explain/interpret the results expected to be obtained.

(vi) Implications and Limitations
This should consist of expected results from your study, its implication in the context of ‘extending the frontier of knowledge and limitations you might encounter that will affect your data collection, analysis and findings.

(vii) References
Use the APA format.

(5) Submission Process
After student prepared the proposal with the consultation of the Supervisor(s), students are require to submits final copy of the proposal to SGS together with Form SGS 003 and power point slides at least one month before the vetting process.

(6) Research Proposal Defense
In the proposal defense session, student must formally defend the research proposal to the Proposal Defense Committee. During the session, the student need to presents the proposal, including the problem identification, background literature and rationale for study, hypotheses, procedural details, analysis plan, and expected limitation. This is the time for dialogue between the student and the committee in order to clarify any questions, discuss and negotiate any suggested modification, recommend resources, and provide support to the research efforts of the student.

SGS tables the appointment of member of Proposal Defense Committee for approval in Postgraduate Studies Committee (PSC) meeting. The task of the Proposal Defense Committee member is to attend the Proposal Defense
Session, critically review and evaluate the proposal and sign the approved proposal.

6. **DATA COLLECTION**

(1) **Permission to Gather Data from Relevant Authorities**

A candidate is requested to seek the permission from the relevant bodies of each country that approves the conduct and the ethical considerations of the research before the candidate is allowed to embark onto the proper data gathering procedures. The letters of consent from the relevant authorities must be disclosed to the supervisor(s) and attached in the thesis as appendix.

(2) **Informed Consent and Protection from Harm**

Perhaps the most basic and important ethical issues in research are concerned with participants’ right to informed consent and freedom from harm. Researchers obtain informed consent by ensuring that research participants enter the research of their free will and with the understanding of the nature of the study and any possible dangers that may occur. This requirement is intended to reduce the likelihood that participants will be exploited by a researcher persuading them to participate when they are not fully aware of what the study’s requirements are.

Researchers must ensure freedom from harm by not exposing participants to undue risks. This requirement includes issues of confidentiality (protecting participants from ridicule or embarrassment) and issues related to personal privacy. Collecting information on participants or observing them without their knowledge or without appropriate permission is considered unethical. Furthermore, any data or information that are gathered, either from or about a person, should be strictly confidential. Access to data should also be limited to persons directly involved in conducting the research.

(3) **Authenticity of Data**

The researcher must declare that the thesis is his/her own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. The researcher further declares that it does not constitute any previous work whether published or otherwise. Candidate and supervisor(s) have the obligation to ensure the authenticity of data.

Data must normally be kept in a safe place with a proper security and for at least two years. Original data must be made available if requested to show evidence of authenticity.
7. WRITING OF THESIS AND DISSERTATION

(1) Introduction

There are many styles of writing thesis and dissertations. For consistency, students are encouraged to conform to the format approved by AeU.

(2) Format of Thesis/Dissertation

Typically, the format of thesis and dissertation consists of 14 parts as suggested below.

1) Cover and Spine
2) Title Page
3) Abstract
4) Signature Approval Page
5) Declaration Page
6) Copyright Page
7) Acknowledgements
8) Table of Contents
9) Lists of Tables
10) List of Figures
11) List of Symbols/Abbreviations/Nomenclature/Transliteration
12) Text
13) Appendices/Supplementaries
14) Citation of Sources

Preliminary Pages: Overview

(Cover and Spine, Title page, Copyright page, Signature Approval Page, Declaration, Acknowledgement, Abstract, Table of Content, List of Figures and List of Tables)

1) Cover and Spine (Refer to Sample A)

The final copy of the thesis/dissertation must be hardbound in black with gold letterings.

As for the cover, the title of the thesis/dissertation, author's name, name of institution (ASIA e UNIVERSITY), and year of submission must be printed in uppercase with font size of 14 pitch in Arial, and centrally alignment. The words in title must be arranged in the inverted pyramid shape.

As for the spine, the title of the thesis/dissertation, author's name, the Degree for which the thesis is submitted, and year in uppercase to be printed on the spine.
If the title of the thesis cannot fit the space in the spine, smaller font is allowable.

2) Title Page (Refer to Sample B)

Title page should include the following:

a. Full title of thesis (in uppercase)
b. Full name of author (in uppercase)
c. Degree for which the thesis is submitted
d. Name of the institution to which the thesis is submitted
e. Month and year of submission

The rules for capitalisation in the document title are strict. The first, last, all principal words and words with 4 letters or more must be capitalised, including those that follow hyphens in compound terms. The only words that should not be capitalised are articles (a, an, the), prepositions (e.g., in, to), and conjunctions (e.g., and, but, for).

3) Abstract

For the doctoral dissertation, an abstract not exceeding 350 words or 2,450 characters is to be included--approximately one and one-half pages doubled-spaced.

The abstract should state the research problem in brief, describe the methods and procedures used in gathering data or studying, the problem, and provide a condensed summary of the findings of the study.

If the thesis is written in another language, the abstract in that language must be translated into English language. The English version must appear in a separate page.

4) Signature Approval Page (Refer to Sample C)

A separate page containing the name of author, title and the signatures of the committee members with their designations. Only persons who has been assigned by the Examination Committee to confirm the corrections to be made to the thesis shall sign this approval page.

5) Declaration Page (refer to Sample D)

Numbered as usual
6) Copyright Page (Refer to Sample E)

Centred at the bottom, no heading, counted but unnumbered.

7) Acknowledgement

Usually contain written expressions of appreciation for guidance and assistance from individuals or/and institutions. The acknowledgements should not exceed 250 words.

8) Table of content

Each thesis or dissertation is expected to have a table of contents for the convenience of the reader.

The table of contents should be easy to read and consistent. The title of each chapter should be written in full capital with no terminal punctuation.

The title of a subdivision of a chapter or section should be in small letters, with the exception of the first letter of significant words.

9) List of Tables

The list of tables follows the table of contents. This list includes the number of each table, the title and the page number.

10) List of Figures

The list of figures follows the list of tables. This list includes the number of each figure, the title and the page number.

11) List of Symbols/Abbreviations/Nomenclature/Transliteration

The list of symbols/abbreviations/nomenclature/transliteration follows the list of tables. This list includes the number of each figure, the title and the page number.

12) Text

There is no specific format for the text. Candidates and supervisors should ensure that the text follows the agreed conventions of the individual School.

Normally, the text consists of the following chapters;
1) Introduction
2) Review of Literature
3) Methodology
4) Findings
5) Summary, Conclusion and Implications
i. Spacing

All text must be double-spaced and justified. Each paragraph should be indented. The double-spacing is even throughout. There should not be any “quadruple” spaces.

ii. Font Size and Typeface

Font size should be 12 pitch for the texts. However, font size of 10 pitch is allowable in tables. Italic print should not be used except for emphasis (e.g. foreign words other than the language used in the thesis). The same typeface must be used throughout the manuscript, including the page numbers, footnotes and/or endnotes. The entire text of the thesis, including headings and page numbers, must be printed using Times New Roman.

iii. Margin

For binding purposes, the left margin should be at least 4cm (1.5 inches) and the right, top and bottom margins should be at least 2.5cm (1 inch). All information (text, headings, footnotes and figures), including page number, must be within the text area.

iv. Page Numbering

All page numbers should be printed 1.0 cm from the bottom margin and placed at the right hand side without any punctuation. Roman numerals (I, ii, iii, etc.) should be used in the preface section. Although the Title Page is the first page of the Preface, no number is printed on it. Numbering begins on the second page with (ii). Arabic numerals (1, 2, 3) are used on the pages of the text and supplementary sections.

13. Appendices/Supplementaries

Specific items which were not included in the main body of the text should be put in the Appendix/Supplementary Section. Typically, this section may include the following items:

1) Research instruments such as questionnaires, maps, interview protocols, or tests
2) Figures
3) Equations
4) Chapter Layout
5) Tables
6) Footnotes
7) Other relevant information
8) Selected bibliography or references
14. Citation of Sources

Sources are normally cited in footnotes, figures, tables and bibliography or references. Reference citations based on the editorial styles of the American Psychological Association (APA).

(3) Length of Thesis and Dissertation

The length of thesis/dissertation should not exceed the stipulated number of words (excluding footnotes, appendices, tables and prefaces) as regulated by the University Senate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Words</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thesis for PhDs</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation for Doctorates</td>
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<tr>
<td>Thesis for Masters</td>
<td>80,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dissertation for Masters</td>
<td>60,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>For School of Management</td>
<td>12,000</td>
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<tr>
<td>For School of Education</td>
<td>6,000</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

(4) Typing

All typing must be double spacing between lines. However, in citing references and quotations, single spacing is recommended.
THE PhD SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP AND PROCESS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

ZALEHA BINTI ISHAK

ASIA e UNIVERSITY
2010
THE PhD SUPERVISORY RELATIONSHIP AND PROCESS IN OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING INSTITUTIONS

ZALEHA BINTI ISHAK

A Thesis Submitted to the School of Education, Asia e University in Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Education

February 2010
I certify that I have supervised / read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in quality and scope, as a thesis for the fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Dr Abdullah Husein  
Supervisor

Professor Abu Bakar Othman  
Co-supervisor

Professor Alan Baker  
External Examiner 1

Dr Hassan Ibrahim  
External Examiner 2

Professor K. Palanasamy  
Internal Examiner 1

Professor Siow Heng Loke  
Chairman, Examination Committee

This thesis was submitted to the School of Education, Asia e University and is accepted as fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

Professor John Arul Phillips  
Dean, School of Education

Professor Siow Heng Loke  
Dean, School of Graduate Studies
Sample D: Example of Declaration

Declaration

I hereby declare that the thesis is submitted in fulfilment of the PhD degree is my own work and that all contributions from any other persons or sources are properly and duly cited. I further declare that the material has not been submitted either in whole or in part, for a degree at this or any other university. In making this declaration, I understand and acknowledge any breaches in this declaration constitute academic misconduct, which may result in my expulsion from the programme and/or exclusion from the award of the degree.

Name: Zaleha binti Ishak

Signature of Candidate: Date: 1 January 2010
8.0 PUBLICATION AND AUTHORSHIP

(1) Publication

A student may choose to submit parts or the entire thesis as a series of related papers, or manuscripts intended for publication. This requires prior consent of the supervisor/supervisory committee and appropriate copyright permission. The paper(s) will normally form one or more well defined thesis chapters; details of organization and content are determined by the student and the supervisory committee. The publication status (submitted, in revision, in press, or published, with dates) and book or journal details (volume, page numbers, etc.) of any manuscripts or papers included in the thesis must be specified with each such chapter.

(2) Authorship

Single or multiple names of authorship is permissible in the publication, provided that the student has made a substantial contribution to the work. Academic unit guidelines may specify the number and/or order of authors in accordance with discipline practice. The student's contribution to both the research and the writing of any multi-authored paper must be clearly specified either in the introduction to the thesis or at the beginning of each relevant chapter.

9.0 SUBMISSION OF THESIS AND DISSERTATION

A candidate is required to submit the notice of submission of research report / dissertation / thesis to the Dean or Director at least three (3) months before the actual date of submission by using Form SGS 006.

The submission has to be completed during the term of candidature. The candidate should lodge six copies of it. At this stage, six copies of the research report can be submitted in loose binding for internal examination. As for the dissertation or thesis, one copy is to be firmly bound in cloth with stiff boards for the external examiner while the remaining five copies are in loose binding. When the research report / dissertation or thesis has been passed by the examiners, all copies submitted are to be firmly bound.

10.0 RESEARCH ETHICS

Research Ethics involves all the moral and professional issues relating to research. The most serious breach of ethical standards in writing research report / dissertation / thesis is the offence of plagiarism: the expropriation of then intellectual property of another. Plagiarism is defined as the use of
original work, ideas or actual texts created by others, without acknowledging
the original source. Such acknowledgement should be made by:

The use of ideas or words of others must be acknowledged individually in the
text. In addition, each of the work consulted has to be included in the
‘references’ or selected bibliography.

If the quoted citation contains more than four sentences, it should be placed
within a paragraph of its own with a 1 cm indentation. For example:

*The general theory of relativity, on its own, cannot explain these features or
answer these questions because of its prediction that the universe started off
with infinite density at the big bang singularity. At the singularity, general
relativity and all other physical laws break down: one couldn’t predict what will
come out of the singularity (Hawking, 1988:122).*

If only part of the quotation is cited, the citation should be marked with an
ellipsis (...), for example:

*There must be give and take, with the teacher being a participant as well as
leader and..., a source of answers’ (Sizer, 1984:9).*