

# Thesis Writing Guidelines

## CHAPTER 1

### THE PROBLEM OR NEED FOR THE STUDY

**Introduction** - this is a general introduction to the topical area. It is a general, broad statement that provides an overview of the area involving your study. Guiding questions for this area are:

- Why is this an important area?
- What has been the historical development of the topic?
- Are there different points of view about the topic?
- Have there been significant investigations, studies, or reports concerning the topical area?
- What is the current status of the area of your interest?
- What are the major outstanding concerns in the general area?

**Statement of the Problem** - since the introduction has given a broad, general background to the study, this should be very specific in nature. The statement of the problem might begin with the words, "The problem of the study is...." or "This study will address the problem of..." Guiding questions for this area are:

- Does the problem pose significance for education?
- Will the problem present data that explains previously unexplained facts?
- Will the problem serve as a point of departure for the study?

**Purpose of the Study** - this section provides you with an opportunity to tell the reader the overall purpose of your study. For a thesis, include research questions to be answered and/or hypotheses. Guiding questions are:

- Is the question directly related to the review of the literature?
- Does the question help clarify the problem statement?
- Does the question project a bias?
- Is it possible to misinterpret the question?
- Is the objective specific and clearly stated?
- Is the objective directly related to the review of the literature?
- Is each hypothesis clearly stated?
- Are the hypotheses testable?

**Limitations** - these are constraints to the study that are beyond your control but that may influence the data. Limitations may emerge at any time during your study.

**Delimitations** - deliberately self-imposed constraints on the research. You define the boundaries in the problem area within which the study will be done, and the population or situation to which the findings may apply.

**Definition of Terms** - be sure that important terms and concepts used in the study are adequately analyzed

and defined. Assign a precise meaning to commonplace words of importance.

**Significance of the Study** - this section provides answers as to what the study will contribute. It should specifically state the value of the study. Why is this study important?

## CHAPTER 2 - REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This is a vital part of the proposal that you present to your committee. It is evidence that you are thoroughly knowledgeable about the research that has been conducted in the area of your proposed investigation. It becomes the basis for your study.

The review is a careful examination of a body of literature pointing toward the answer to the problem of your study. It is essential to discover what is already known about your topic/area. Guiding questions are:

- What is known about my subject?
- Are there any gaps of knowledge of my subject?
- Have these gaps been identified by other researchers or professionals in the field?
- Is there a consensus on relevant issues or is there significant debate?
- What are the various positions?
- What direction should my study take based on my review of the literature?

**Introduction** - give the reader a description of the procedure you used in conducting your review of the literature. What databases were used in the review? Tell how the chapter will be organized, e.g. topically?, chronologically?, historically?, etc. What sections will be included in the chapter?

### Subsequent Sections

## CHAPTER 3 - METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this chapter is to provide, in detail, clear and understandable statements describing EVERY STEP you will take in carrying out your study.

**Research Design** - let the reader know the type of design you are using and why that research design was chosen.

**Population/Sample/(Participants, if qualitative)** - carefully identify the sample and describe in detail the manner in which it was chosen. Naturally, if you are including all possible subjects, you are dealing with a population. In this case, you describe the characteristics of the population.

**Instrument (Data Collection, if qualitative)** - identify each instrument you will use to measure the variables in your study. There should be a separate subsection for each instrument. Information should be provided regarding the development of the instrument, the history of its use, data regarding its validity and reliability, data regarding how the instrument is administered and scored and anything else that will give insight into its appropriateness. Additionally, provide a rationale for the selection of your instruments. Generally, a copy of the instrument should be included in the appendix (for the proposal and the final thesis). If you are conducting qualitative inquiry, explain your data collection procedures.

**Data Analysis** - discuss how the data will be analyzed and include any statistical treatments.

**Procedures** - describe each and every step taken to do your study. It is a type of "road map" that others must follow if they choose to replicate your study. Include the steps you took to contact the population/sample in your study, how you obtained their cooperation, how the instrument(s) were administered, how the data was handled as it was returned, how follow-ups were handled, etc. Copies of all letters, instruction sheets, etc. should be placed in the appendices. If you are using a human population, you must submit an Application for Approval of Investigations Involving the Use of Human Subjects to the Boise State University Institutional Review Board before you begin your study. Talk to your advisor to make sure this important step is completed. Refer to the Office of Research website: <http://www.boisestate.edu/research/> Check in the forms area.

Guiding questions:

- Is the sample adequate in kind and number?
- Is the sample appropriate for the purpose of the study?
- Is the sample sufficiently representative of the population to permit you to generalize the findings?

**Timeline (present only in proposal)** - give your committee a schedule for your study including a completion date. Keep in mind the dates set each semester by the graduate college that determine deadlines for defending your thesis.

## CHAPTER 4 - FINDINGS

**Introduction** - tell the reader how you have organized the findings. Typically, you would organize them around your study's research questions or hypotheses. There should be an analysis of each section and tables/charts included.

**Interpretation & Discussion** - this gives you an opportunity to move beyond the data with inferences and implications. Guiding questions:

- Have you provided an overview of the significant findings of the study?
- Have you discussed the findings and compared them to existing research studies?
- Have you presented implications of the study for education?
- Have you discussed the applications of your findings?

## CHAPTER 5 - SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

**Summary** - this is an overview of the study and not a summary of your findings. Restate the problem, research questions, hypotheses and a short summary of the procedures you followed in conducting your study.

**Conclusions** - these are the conclusions you draw from your findings. Number the conclusions. The conclusions must relate directly to the findings.

**Recommendations** - these should be based on the conclusions. Number the Recommendations. Guiding

questions are:

- Are the summary, conclusions and recommendations concisely and precisely stated?
- Are the conclusions and recommendations justified by the data gathered?
- Does the study suggest related problems that need to be investigated?
- Are your recommendations data-based and stem directly from the data and the conclusions?

## **REFERENCES**

You must use the APA Publication Manual in listing your references. Include only the sources that were used in the study.

**APPENDICES** - these vary with each thesis.