SGS 045

THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal is the most important part of the doctoral application and must be considered very carefully. The proposal allows the school to assess the strength of the applicant (other than through the applicant's academic qualifications), the suitability of the proposed research and the availability of experts to supervise the work. To be clear, the proposal should give us an opportunity to:

1. assess the candidate's knowledge of the subject,
2. match the proposed research with the appropriate experts/supervisors,
3. assess whether we have the expertise needed to supervise the work
4. develop the rightly tailored support to help the student succeed.

The proposal should contain a 3,000 - 5,000-word explanation of the proposed research, stating why the research is of value. The content of a doctoral proposal may vary considerably, but must generally contain the following elements:

1. **A working title:** The title of the research will expectedly change over the course of the research, but it is a good start to have a title that encapsulates the intention of the project.
2. **Aims of the research:** The research aims should show the overall purpose of the study and should generally be well focused and concise.
3. **Research questions or hypotheses**: The proposal should show what research questions or hypotheses can help achieve the aims listed. The committee can judge whether they are achievable.
4. **Context and literature:** The proposal should demonstrate the candidate's knowledge of the research area and the current debates in the field. So, the proposal should contain a review of current literature related to the intended project, highlight the gaps, and show how original research can help fill them. A competent literature review will show how the proposed research builds on current knowledge and what new understanding the research could bring. The literature cited should be relevant and up to date.
5. **Candidate's Interest:** The candidate should demonstrate their interest and knowledge gained either from previous study, employment, or lived experience.
6. **Methodology:** The proposal should contain a clear description of the research methodology, including basic details of methods of data collection and analysis. It should show the type of data required and how they intend to collect and analyze them. Most importantly, it should say how the methods chosen will address the research aims previously described.
7. **Timeline:** A schedule showing key activities, milestones, and potential outcomes would be useful. A realistic timescale for completing the project will demonstrate that the candidate has thought through the process. It will also allow departmental reviewers to assess whether the project is achievable within a four-year timescale.
8. **References:** Literature cited in the proposal should be listed using a consistent referencing style.

The proposal must always be reviewed by a committee of at least three experts. The committee members should use the attached Form PG1 to grade and score each candidate. Please return all completed Form PG1 to the graduate school along with your recommendation.

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA
SCHOOL OF GRADUATE STUDIES

Doctoral Application Assessment Sheet

This form should be completed by each member of the School's Doctoral Application Review Committee and submitted along with the Committee's recommendation to the Graduate School

Student's Name:
PhD in:
Title of Proposed Research:

Date Submitted:

DD *MM* *YY*

Tick one grade box for each category.

CATEGORY	1 Unacceptable	2 Weak	3 Satisfactory	4 good	5 Excellent	6 Outstanding
ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE Clarity of argument						
RESEARCH AIMS, QUESTIONS & HYPOTHESES						
CONTENT Use of evidence, use of literature						
QUALITY OF WRITING						
RESEARCH DESIGN & METHODS Quality and appropriateness of proposed research methodology						
REFERENCES AND BIBLIOGRAPHY						
OPTIONAL CATEGORY (Please add):						
TOTAL						

Overall score (please add totals):…….

Reviewer's comments [please comment on the strength of the proposal and the candidate. Continue on separate sheet if necessary]:

REVIEWER'S SIGNATURE AND DATE NAME OF REVIEWER

Reviewer scoring scale

Please use the following key for overall scores

Score	Description
6 (Outstanding)	The proposal is **outstanding** in its potential scientific merit. This candidate should be recommended for admission and mentored to take on a TA role.
5 (Excellent)	The proposal is **excellent** in its potential scientific merit. The candidate should be recommended for admission.
4 (Good)	The proposal is **important** as it has considerable potential merit. This candidate should be placed on a waiting list and accepted when there is an opportunity.
3 (Satisfactory)	The proposal has **significant** potential scientific merit but is not of a consistently high quality. This candidate can be placed on a waiting list, and only accepted if there is an opportunity and additional support.
2 (Weak)	The proposal will add to understanding and is **worthy** of support but is of lesser quality or urgency than more highly rated proposals. This candidate should be declined.
1 (Unacceptable, Poor)	The proposal is **flawed;** or repetitious of other works; or not worth pursuing; or, though possibly having sound objectives, is seriously defective in its methodological approach. This candidate should be declined.