



# **Thesis Writing in Ethiopia: Student Guidebook**

**MPH, MSc, MA, MS, MBA, MSW, MPA, MEd, HRM, LLM, and others.**

Syre & Syre

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Students, academic staff, and administrators of the universities in Ethiopia are encouraged to share and discuss this guidebook to assist with enhancement in language, style, and formatting of master's theses. Revise it to meet the preferences of your university.

Please send your feedback about this guidebook to Thomas Syre, Sr., corresponding author, at [ectrs2000@gmail.com](mailto:ectrs2000@gmail.com).

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## Acknowledgements

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## **An Invitation and Challenge to Students**

Dear Student:

We invite you on a unique academic journey. We challenge you to action.

Writing a thesis is an academic journey like no other. It is a long, intellectually challenging, and sometimes exasperating journey to scholarship. You have written research-based papers for classes in your university setting. However, a thesis takes you on a new and different trip, and will empower you with new skills and knowledge, including enhanced analytical problem-solving skills, more robust research and statistics proficiencies, and increased understanding of a subject matter. This subject matter may be in the area of health/medicine, the hard sciences, the social sciences, or the humanities. Thesis writing will academically mature you, and the journey from beginning to end can be one of the greatest successes in your life.

Perhaps you are a health practitioner with a hospital, an administrator of a non-governmental or international organization, or you seek promotion in a large business enterprise. Alternatively, you are a rising academic—an instructor or lecturer—and plan to research and teach at a university or college. Regardless of your status or plans, you must be able to express your ideas without ambiguity.

Importantly, thesis writing provides you the opportunity to improve your writing skills. It is not enough to develop expertise with statistical software and testing, data manipulation, research design, or subject matter. Scholars must have a command of the English language and express themselves in written format. With commitment, effort, and time on this journey, you will become a better writer.

From reading and editing hundreds of theses at Ethiopian universities and institutes, we know there is a need for this guidebook. We have come to understand the strengths of these theses, but also the problems. We discuss many of these problems and their solutions in this guidebook.

This guidebook is written from advising scores of master's degree students in the preparation of a thesis. We have participated as evaluators in over one hundred oral thesis defenses. Our evaluation of these theses revealed a broad range of scholarship, research rigor, and English language use. The thesis format, style, content, and English language use varied widely within and across universities. The oral defenses ranged in quality from remarkable scholarship to embarrassment for the student.

A few of the theses examined were opinion papers in large font written in clumsy English with fifteen-year-old citations and references. These theses provided little academic value. Some were duplicated research studies from older theses. Happily, however, many were exemplary. The exemplary theses were carefully prepared and contribute to knowledge in Ethiopia and beyond. The theses' content, timeliness of subject, sophistication in design, and research implementation were exemplary. These carefully crafted theses were written in a recognizable style, a logical format, and in English that could be understood and appreciated by the readers.

Regardless of academic rigor, subject complexity, statistical finesse, or findings, we saw problems with style and format. Strange chapter terminology, peculiar chapter contents, the absence of objectives or hypotheses, multiple font types, odd margins, confusing tables, computational errors in the narrative and tables, and varied colors were common. Problems included mixed styles for citations and references. Many of the references were incomplete or incorrect, and any attempt to locate and read the sources was pointless.

English language problems included long, convoluted sentences, incomplete sentences, colloquialisms, tense confusion, gender bias, punctuation errors, and a panoply of style and grammar problems. Some sentences did not make sense.

## **Guidebook Contents**

This guidebook is about what a thesis looks like and what it includes. It tackles what you need to accomplish to create a praiseworthy thesis and what you can learn from the effort.

The guidebook discusses style and format issues, the structure of the proposal and thesis, and citations and references. It also goes over plagiarism and English language pointers for Ethiopian writers. Practical tips for thesis advisor selection and websites that help you with thesis writing and language are included.

A seven-part guidebook, the first presents the visuals of style and format—fonts, margins, headings and subheadings, line spacing and paragraph format, page numbering, and setup, and table and figure presentation. We offer language advice.

The second part discusses thesis proposal writing with the understanding that a well-organized, logically conceptualized, and well-written thesis proposal leads to a better thesis. The sections of a thesis proposal are discussed from cover page to the thesis proposal approval sheet.

Thesis writing is the third part. The structure of the thesis and the sections from cover page to the last appendix are explained. Learn about the traditional thesis chapter titles and what is included in each of them.

Part four of the guidebook discusses citations and references. Complete references in the proper style are required for a passing thesis, and a comprehensive literature review of your topic and research questions will yield dozens of sources. These sources will be included in the thesis proposal and thesis as citations and references. Proper presentation of these sources is expected in a scholarly paper. The formatting of these citations will follow the style approved by the university.

Academic ethics, plagiarism, and plagiarism detection websites are discussed in part five. Listed are websites and software packages that can assist in your writing and tracking sources to avoid unintentional plagiarism.

The oral thesis defense is a memorable event. Part six discusses this defense and emphasizes the need for preparation. From our defense experiences, we share suggestions for a successful defense.

Finally, part seven provides samples of pages included in the thesis proposal and thesis. Established formatting for these pages is suggested within and across universities.

### **Call to Action**

As a student with the responsibility of completing a thesis as partial fulfillment of your master's degree, support the following actions at your institution:

- Request a meeting of the students and academics to discuss the format and style of a thesis. Ideally, this convention is conducted on a yearly basis or more often.
- Ask the university to duplicate and distribute an official thesis guidebook or similar document and make it available to students and academic staff members. Thesis style and format should not be a mystery, but readily known among students. The institution can distribute copies to academic staff members who advise master's degree students with completing a thesis.
- It is routine practice at colleges and universities in Europe and the United States to post thesis manuals and guidebooks on their university websites. Ask your university to upload an approved guidebook to your university's website for easy access and reference. You may also request the creation of a Facebook page for the thesis documents.
- Create a thesis writing support group in your department or college. Writing a thesis can lead to isolation. Mutual support of other thesis researchers is often absent. However, it does not have to be this way. Find other master's students in your department or college and form a small group of four or five to talk about progress and encourage writing. Also, read each other's thesis drafts and comment on them, knowing that if you have problems with content, style, or format, the advisors and thesis evaluators surely will. Thesis student support groups are common in the United States and Europe, and they contribute to enhanced scholarship, improved collaboration skills, and building writing discipline.

### **Closing**

Writing a thesis is an opportunity to learn and a chance to become a scholar. The thesis is not an additional duty for the master's degree; it is the capstone scholarship experience for earning your postgraduate degree and, from start to submission, it will take several hundred hours and many months to complete. Embrace this invitation for the journey with enthusiasm. It can be a positive life-changing experience as you become a scholar.

Enjoy the journey.

## **What is a Thesis?**

A thesis is a scholarly research-based document that adds new knowledge to a discipline. A thesis does not retell facts that have already been assembled and shared; it presents new knowledge. It demonstrates your mastery of a subject matter, your analytical thinking abilities, researching expertise, and writing skills. It is a unique document of your scholarship in the postgraduate course of study.

The purpose of a thesis is to research a relevant and unexplored issue, establish a viewpoint on a particular attribute of this issue, and present compelling evidence through investigating the literature. It usually involves planned data collection, statistical analyses, detailed examination, and a discussion of research findings, conclusions, and recommendations.

Thesis topic consideration and approval are critical. The rehashing of previous research with little new knowledge is a waste of time, energy, money, and other resources. The topic should be timely. Determining your thesis topic requires significant research.

In contrast to other types of university and college papers where the professor does not see your work until you submit it as a final product, a thesis evolves from idea conceptualization to a final thesis through a cooperative effort between your thesis advisors and you. You develop and maintain a collaborative effort with your thesis advisors.

The proposal topic is formally approved before you commence thesis research. This approval ensures that you have a thesis statement and a grasp of the objectives. The research is not duplicative, too broad, too narrow, or too simple. Throughout research and writing, the advisors evaluate the thesis in progress and make recommendations for improvements.

Depending on the subject matter and data collection methods, your work on a thesis consumes as much as an academic year. With a timely topic, excellent research activities, significant findings, and solid writing, you can plan to publish your work in peer-reviewed journals or other credible publications.

## **Part 1. Style and Format**

A thesis should have consistent style and format, with the writing following established language guidelines. The style and format guidelines presented on the following pages are those commonly used in universities in Ethiopia, the United States, Canada, Australia, and other nations. Often, institutions will have a thesis style and format tailored to varied disciplines. Check with your professors and confirm it with the accepting thesis office at the institution. Universities and colleges in Ethiopia should have a readily available document or website that outlines thesis style and format.

Scholarly writing in English can be a challenge if it is your second or even third language. Thesis writing provides you the opportunity to enhance your writing skills. Academic English language writing is an essential byproduct of writing a thesis if assistance and guidance are provided. Ask your thesis advisors, English-first colleagues, and others with strong writing skills to read your proposal and thesis drafts and make editorial comments. Make it a learning process.

Thesis writers who pursue a master’s degree often choose careers as academic staff members at universities and colleges in Ethiopia. Enhance your writing skills through thesis writing so you may assist future students with writing matters.

### **Font**

Times New Roman 12-point font is used in writing the body of a thesis unless otherwise advised by the university. A second choice is Calibri 12-point font. Do not use multiple fonts in proposals or theses; one font type is used throughout. You present the cover and title pages in 14-point bold font and 14-point font for first level headings with no bolding of text. Black font color should solely be used. URL website addresses are underlined and printed in black.

### **Margins**

Provide a margin of 3.0 cm on the left side of the page for binding purposes. The right, top, and bottom margins shall have 2.5 cm of space. Apply the same margin dimensions to all pages. Margins do not vary with figures or tables. All pages of the proposal and thesis follow these margin rules.

### **Headings and Subheadings**

Write each title of the chapter in bold uppercase letters. The text of the chapter titles is centered on the page.

Chapter headings are numbered with Arabic numerals starting from 1 for the introduction and end with 7 or 8 for the appendix. The Arabic numerals are followed by a period, a space, and the chapter title without the word “chapter” included—i.e., 1. Introduction.

Number the second level headings, or subheadings, consecutively with Arabic numerals in an outline numbering system—i.e., 1.1, 1.2, etc. Also use the outline numbering system for lower

level headings—i.e., 1.1.1, 1.1.2, etc. To have a numbered subheading, there must be at least two subheadings under the higher-level heading.

For second-level headings, capitalize the first letter of each word. Write the lower level headings in sentence case format. Capitalize only the first letter of the heading unless otherwise required by grammatical or nomenclature rules.

Align second level and lower level heading text to the left. Separate the headings from the narrative with an extra line. Do not underline or italicize headings, subheadings, or captions of tables or figures. Follow the language rules for underlining and italicizing. Visit websites like [www.grammarly.com/handbook](http://www.grammarly.com/handbook), [www.scribens.com](http://www.scribens.com), or [www.languagetool.org](http://www.languagetool.org) for advice.

### **Line Spacing and Paragraph Format**

The line spacing for all narrative text is 1.5 lines. This allows for easier reading. However, apply single line spacing to captions of tables and figures. Keep an extra line (1.5 lines of space) between paragraphs above and below all headings, subheadings, and captions. Justify the narrative text in block paragraph format. Use block paragraph format throughout the document.

### **Page Numbering and Setup**

Begin each section of the thesis on a new page. Assign a number to every page of the thesis proposal and thesis except the cover page. Use small Roman numerals—i.e., ii, iii, iv, etc.—for the preliminary sections (up until the introduction). Do not number the title page. Use Arabic numerals from the first page of the introduction to the last page of the appendix. Center the page numbers at the bottom of each of the pages in 12-point font. Do not include periods or dashes with the page numbers.

Decide on the most appropriate way to present your data. Do not use tables and figures for the same data discussed in the narrative. Tables and figures add to and do not duplicate information. Put borders above and below the column headings, and below the last row of the table. Bold the headings within the tables and figures. Place tables and figures logically and near the first citation in the narrative. Limit the tables and figures to single pages; multiple pages of tables and figures confuse the reader and make data interpretation difficult. Tables and figures should provide critical explanatory information to the thesis and not act as additions to the thesis.

Validate computational correctness. For example, do you have total percentages of 103 or 99? Check the data and arithmetic computations. The numerical values cited in the narrative must match those in the tables. Indicate significance levels with an asterisk.

Give all tables and figures a clear and concise caption. Use table notes to describe the contents of the caption with superscripted numbers. For readability, use landscape rather than portrait orientation. Do not use more than two returns between tables and figures and the narrative text. Present the tables and figures clearly; they are self-explanatory.

## Additional Style and Format Issues

Scientific names, the use of italics, and Ethiopian currency (ETB) are concerns.

- Write scientific names in italic font with the genus name starting with a capital letter and the species epithet appearing in lowercase letters. According to APA, italics are also appropriate for titles of books, journals and periodicals, films, and videos.
- Give all measurements in metric units.
- Use the Ethiopian Birr (ETB) for budget discussions.

Avoid wordy, complicated, and awkward sentences. Be cautious of sentences that are more than twenty-five words long. Lengthy sentences often baffle the reader. Write short and easily understandable sentences, so the reader focuses on content rather than language difficulties.

Follow correct language rules when it comes to the capitalization of proper names and places and the use of punctuation. Use the active voice. Avoid gender bias.

- Do not use contractions such as shouldn't, can't, and won't in proposals or theses.
- Personal pronouns such as I, you, and we may or may not be used depending on the university policy. The trend in the last decade is that "I" is used rather than "the researcher." However, if these pronouns are permitted, "I" is used for the author of the thesis. "We" is not appropriate, as it suggests the thesis has been co-authored. You are the thesis writer who is solely responsible for the document.
- "Respectively" at the end of sentences is used only rarely. While convenient for the writer, these sentences almost always confuse the reader.
- Colloquialisms, slang, clichés, and informal phrases used in English do not belong in a thesis proposal or thesis. Examples include, for example, screw up, ASAP, on the other hand, stuff, get in touch with, acid test, and bitter end. Thesis proposals and theses are scholarly documents. Do not include informal language.
- Minimize technical jargon. Define technical words or phrases so a reader who is not familiar with the field of study can understand.
- Do not misspell words or allow grammatical errors in your thesis proposal or thesis. Use the Spelling and Grammar check in your word processor software to avoid English language spelling and grammar mistakes. You may wish to use the free Grammarly website at [www.grammarly.com](http://www.grammarly.com), BibMe at [www.bibme.com](http://www.bibme.com), owl.english.purdue.edu/owl, or [www.scribens.com](http://www.scribens.com). Other sites are discussed in a later section of this guidebook. Use American rather than British spelling.
- Think thoughtfully when choosing your thesis advisors. Choose with care. Graduates of your post-graduate program can best advise you on the preferred advisors. Thesis advisors

are academic staff members, and all are busy with teaching, advising, researching, program activities, writing for publication, and consulting. Identify those who will be available to you and provide you advice. You and your thesis advisors are a team in the thesis proposal and thesis effort, and this cooperation begins with advisor selection. The journey is long from thesis topic conceptualization to the final thesis defense and thesis submission to the university. Aside from research and statistical questions, you will ask for guidance in document style, formatting, and English language. Their role of advisors is that of mentor and teacher. Benefit from their wealth of education and experience.

- Visit the academic dean or department head and examine well-written thesis proposals and theses. Visit the library and investigate theses of graduates to observe the correct style and format. What does an excellent thesis proposal look like? Pursue this information. Do not guess. Learn from your predecessors.

### **Research Protocol with Human Subjects**

The majority of the theses completed in Ethiopia involve human subjects. Please follow a proper research protocol when researching human subjects:

- Know the benefits and risks of subjects involved in the research.
- Deliver the planned and exact information to the study subjects.
- Be aware of special incentives that subjects may receive for participation in the study.
- Know the procedures for verifying informed consent of the study subjects.
- Detail how you will secure and keep all of the collected data confidential.

When studying human subjects, be respectful and mindful of them. Methods used with studying humans must be ethical. In any interviewing, consider language, literacy, vocabulary, and cultural matters. Above all, do not harm or offend your subjects.

Your university's Ethics Review Committee must formally approve- in writing- the proposed research study before the research begins. Keep the approval letter as the oral thesis defense members may ask to see it. Also, when you submit manuscripts of your research for publication, journal editors may request a copy of the letter. This ethics committee approval must be mentioned in the thesis and all manuscripts submitted for publication.

## **Part 2. Thesis Proposal Writing**

The ultimate success of a thesis depends on a well-conceptualized and well-written proposal. You have carefully selected an original and relevant thesis topic, and the department or school selection committee has approved your topic in an oral defense session. Importantly, the advisors must support the research topic, general and specific objectives, research design, statistical testing procedures, and geographic location.

Do not proceed with thesis proposal writing without unanimous approval by your advisors. Meet as a team to confirm approval and take notes at this meeting for future reference. Do not waste time having to select a new topic, new objectives, or alternate research design after you have begun writing.

Your thesis proposal topic and research design should be innovative and groundbreaking. Do not duplicate the research of other previously-written theses with the same or similar topics, general and specific objectives, populations, or research designs.

In the public health discipline, for example, similar thesis topics with slight geographic location variation are difficult to defend in Ethiopia because of the published, consistent, and predictable results, conclusions, and recommendations in some areas. These duplicative theses add little to the knowledge base in the discipline.

Upon completion, the thesis proposal must be approved and signed by the advisors and the institution. The proposal adheres to what has been formally approved at the onset of research. The sections of the thesis proposal are carefully crafted.

### **Organization of a Thesis Proposal**

Submit your thesis proposal with clearly defined sections. Begin each of these sections on a new page. Write all section titles in uppercase letters.

#### **Cover Page**

The cover page includes expected information—it is simple, informative, and unpretentious. It should include:

- Name of university
- College/faculty/school
- Department
- Thesis Proposal
- Title of the thesis
- Full name of the student with the academic degree(s) previously earned
- Date submitted
- University location

The thesis should have a specific and concise title that accurately describes the topic, research, and the area or region of Ethiopia. Avoid phrases such as “The Study of” or “An Investigation into” The title should capture the central theme of the proposed study. Scientific and medical words in the title are accepted where appropriate.

### **Acknowledgements**

Rarely included in a thesis proposal, an acknowledgements page includes a few sentences that recognize the persons and institutions you are grateful to for guidance and support in the preparation of the thesis proposal. In secular national universities, do not acknowledge or thank religious deities.

### **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

List the abbreviations and acronyms with explanations in alphabetical order on a single page. Do not list SI Units and internationally known abbreviations.

In the text, define each abbreviation and acronym—other than Standard International Units—in full when they are first used, followed by the abbreviations or acronyms in parentheses. Do not italicize abbreviations and symbols.

### **Table of Contents**

All headings and entries in the table of contents correspond exactly in wording, font, and case with headings and entries as they appear in the text of the proposal. Subdivisions of headings should not exceed four levels. You may use the built-in style of MS Word or another word processor to create the table of contents.

### **List of Tables**

A list of tables is a reference tool that allows your readers to quickly and easily navigate to data in your thesis proposal or thesis. Construction of a list is similar to creating a table of contents. Format appropriately. Check that page numbers are correct. Note that a list of tables rarely occurs in a thesis proposal.

### **List of Figures**

A list of figures is also a reference tool that allows your readers to quickly and easily navigate to information in your thesis proposal or thesis. Again, format appropriately and check page numbers. Note that a list of figures rarely occurs in a thesis proposal.

### **Summary**

In this section, include the background of the thesis topic, study objectives, and the planned research methods. The summary should be concise and less than one page in length. Present it in one single block-form paragraph using 1.5 line spacing without subtitles or divisions.

## **Chapters of a Thesis Proposal**

Your thesis proposal is a planning document. You logically organize it into chapters to present a research topic with a plan for collecting and analyzing data to answer questions. Thesis proposals in Ethiopia generally include six chapters. These are an introduction, a literature review, a methods chapter, a plan of activities, a budget, a references chapter, and appendix. The approval sheet is the last page of the proposal. We present the thesis proposal chapters below.

### **Introduction**

The introduction is the first chapter of a thesis proposal. It is brief and provides pertinent background information on the research project. It includes a clear statement of the nature and extent of the problem and the objectives that specify the research goals, information to be gathered, and questions or hypotheses to be tested. Subheadings may include background, statement of the problem, the significance of the study, and objectives of the study, which includes both the general objective and specific objectives.

This chapter is usually no more than five pages. Use the future tense as appropriate.

### **Literature Review**

The literature review is a critical analysis of relevant knowledge on the proposed research topic. This chapter will discuss the strengths, limitations, and, most importantly, the gaps identified in previous studies. Use citations that are from the past eight years. Scholars describe the Internet as the open library to the world of knowledge for the latest research.

Many national universities in Ethiopia now require that seventy-five percent of the references be published within the last eight years. Recent publication assures the reader that you have conducted a current and comprehensive search on the topic and are not relying on, for example, older, similar theses or older published books as primary reference documents.

Limit citations that are nine years and older except to provide a historical perspective. In particular, avoid older citations in the areas of technology and medicine where advancements are constant and accelerated.

Do not reference unpublished documents or lay sources. Be careful in referencing Ethiopian magazines and newspapers as some are not scholarly sources of information. Do not reference your class notes. You may review them, but do not include in your literature review, citations, or references.

Indications of a well-researched literature review include contents from peer-reviewed publications. Pursue studies or articles in reputable journals and websites with recent dates of publication and high relevance to the thesis topic.

The university libraries in Ethiopia continue to evolve, and the problems with limited hard-copy journals and books in Ethiopia's university and college libraries are diminishing. Fortunately,

many if not most sources today are from online searches. Examples of sites include PLOS and the BMC journal series. Recent Ethiopian ministerial and government documents also contribute to the review of the literature. Recent national and international non-governmental agency reports, both Internet-based and hard copy, on your thesis subject can be informative and useful. Regardless of the subject, little cannot be found on the Internet today with aggressive searching.

Depending on the thesis topic, focus first on the published research studies from Ethiopia, other sub-Saharan African nations, and the developing nations. Published research from advanced global regions or countries like Europe, Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States should be evaluated for relevance. For example, the relevance of advanced medical technologies and experimental drug therapies conducted in a research center in London, U.K. is not relevant to the technologies and drug therapies available in a university hospital located in Harar, Ethiopia. The effectiveness of select Internet-based learning technologies used in the Netherland's elementary schools may not be relevant to those used in Ethiopia's public elementary schools.

African Journals Online (AJOL) is an excellent website. As of 2018, AJOL hosts 521 journals, including 245 open access journals. Also, HINARI, PLoS, ELDIS, and BMC are just a few of the dozens of Internet platforms to find the latest research studies published in the last few years on most any topic.

Visit the Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ) on the Internet. Also, international global organizations present current research on their websites. The Ethiopian government and non-government reports, journals, and books can also be helpful for the literature review if recently published.

Search out the Ethiopian scholars and their work in Ethiopia. The research and publication efforts by university academic staff in Ethiopia over the last two decades are both admirable and noteworthy. Many of the national and private universities in Ethiopia publish at least one reputable peer-reviewed journal. The *East African Journal of Health and Biomedical Sciences* by Haramaya University, the *Ethiopian Journal of Education and Sciences* by Jimma University, and *Ethiopian Journal of Business and Economics* by Addis Ababa University are three examples of sources. Also, national organizations are publishing research. The *Ethiopian Journal of Health Development* by the Ethiopian Public Health Association and the *Ethiopian Medical Journal* by the Ethiopian Medical Association are reputable peer-reviewed journals in their fields.

## **Methods**

The methods chapter describes what you plan and how you will conduct your research. Be clear in your discussion. If, for example, you are conducting a school or community based cross-sectional study, what exactly are your methods for data collection? Discuss the proposed questionnaires, any focus group discussion aids, and all other instruments employed in data collection. What is the sample population? Are you using a published standardized questionnaire, but with a translation? Describe your methods for analyzing the data. Be specific.

In this chapter, discuss the appropriate procedures to attain the proposed objectives of the study. Research methods must be suitable to the problem area, i.e., the statement of the problem, the

objectives, and hypotheses. When selecting your research methods, again, think of how you will conduct the proposed research.

Consider the affordability of the research. Do you have the money required to conduct the research you plan? The expense of equipment, the necessary office and laboratory supplies, travel costs, and labor outlays have to be considered.

Address the methods of data collection, data quality control, and data analysis procedures. Be clear about what you plan to do. The methods chapter usually includes:

- Definitions of terms
- Definitions of variables
- Description of the study area—region, zone, kebele
- Study period to collect data
- Study design that is clearly explained.
- Description of the population: the source population, the study population, the sample population, and inclusive and exclusive criteria.
- Sampling methods: clear and specific details of sample size formulae, calculations, and sampling methods.
- Data collection methods are many and depend upon the academic discipline. For social and behavioral sciences, they could include questionnaires completed by the research subjects, formal observations, focus group discussions, and in-depth personal interviews. Equipment check lists, specimen collection, and laboratory analyses are other methods.
- Describe the methods, techniques, and statistical tests used for data analysis. Also, identify software names with version numbers planned for use (i.e., SPSS Statistics Version 21.0, SAS Version 9.4, Epi Info Version 7.2) in the thesis proposal. Consider all of the statistical packages as some are open-source, public domain, freeware, and proprietary.
- Discuss how to check data collection instruments, plans for ensuring data confidentiality, and the reliability and validity of instruments used in the research. If an international organization's questionnaire, or an adaptation of it, will be used, then state this in the proposal and discuss any available reliability and validity issues of the instrument.

### **Plan of Activities**

The fourth chapter includes a brief narrative of the research plan and a timetable or chart. Focus on time management for the research project. Assign periods for the completion of various activities of the proposed research. Include only major research activities and your corresponding

periods in the table. You may use a Gantt chart to explain your schedule. Gantt charts illustrate the start and finish dates of the critical elements of the thesis research project.

## **Budget**

The budget chapter is a narrative of the costs of the research. It describes in sentence format the financial resources required to conduct the research project. Aside from the discussion, you then list precisely the costs for personnel per diem days, data collection days, travel costs, the equipment, expendable supplies, materials, and associated services for the project. Presenting the financial information in tables is helpful, but a narrative discussion is required. A budget section with only tables is grossly incomplete.

Occasionally, the university, governmental organizations, or non-governmental organizations will financially support research in small amounts of Ethiopian Birr. Partial funding is especially true if the research topic is of timely concern to the institution or organization. You may wish to approach these sources by writing small grant proposals or letters that include the requested amount with a justification for funds requested. The actual costs of the budget items for the research must be accurate. Inflated costs in the budget diminish any funding considerations.

## **References**

This chapter includes all works cited in the thesis proposal. If there is a citation in the text, there must be a reference for it. In Ethiopia, the American Psychological Association (APA) style and Vancouver style for in-text citations and references are more commonly used. However, Harvard and Chicago Manual of Style are two others that may be required for your thesis.

Organize your references according to the citation style required by your department, university, or college. As a scholarly document, there is an expectation of exactness in the references with the author's name, date, title, volume, and pages. Adhere to proper capitalization, commas, placement of dates, italicized numbers, and other details.

You will have many web page citations. Be sure to include the author, title, date posted (if provided), retrieval date, and the exact URL. If the thesis evaluators are unable to find the sites, they have the option to delay the oral thesis defense or decline signing the thesis until viewed.

Citation management software and websites are helpful. Described as a digital filing cabinet, these are your bibliography creators. Multiple programs and websites come with digital annotating, keyword assignments, automatic article updates, and suggested papers. These programs bring consistency to the documents. The software and websites assist in maintaining accurate sources for citations and references. For example, <http://guides.lib.uchicago.edu> provides comparison information such as working with or without internet connection, word processor compatibility, importing citations from web pages, and other matters.

Citation software allows the integration of information with MS Word and provides for an effortless style change. Reordering of citations that comes with editing and drafting a thesis proposal and thesis is also possible. Furthermore, citation software makes it possible for you to

save and track references that they identify in the course of your research. Zotero, Mendeley, and Endnote are three excellent sources. The first two are available for download at no cost. Endnote requires a subscription or purchase.

Learn to use a citation manager as it will provide ease and flexibility. Learning a preferred software and using it leads to more accuracy and reduced errors in the proposal and thesis citations and references. Some software packages also examine the document for plagiarism.

## **Appendix**

The appendix is the final chapter of the thesis proposal. It often includes a sample questionnaire or focus group discussion guideline in English with a translation into Amharic or another local language planned for use in data collection. Please note that even with Internet translation software, linguists remind us of the challenges in translating documents from English into another language because of idioms, colloquialisms, syntax, and cross-cultural differences. Thesis researchers using a translated questionnaire or another document for data collection are wise to conduct reliability and validity testing.

Often the documents and their translations are carefully studied by the thesis readers and examiners. Questions arise in the oral thesis defenses about the accuracy of the translations. The Internet provides guidance on more effectively translating documents.

The appendix may also include a sample of the consent forms, an observation checklist, a conceptual framework, a map of the research area, and photographs of medical or farm technologies used in the research.

## **Approval Sheet**

The approval sheet is the last page of the thesis proposal. Original signatures are required on the original thesis proposal and all copies.

## **Part 3. Thesis Writing**

A master's thesis is much more than a research paper. The scope is broader, and it provides the student an opportunity to develop a career skill: to develop and write logical and systematic arguments on an academic topic. Writing a thesis is one of the final steps in earning your degree; therefore, it must reflect a thorough understanding of a discipline, relevant theories, and contain original research. Historically, the page lengths for master's theses in Ethiopia are an average of sixty pages including the appendices.

A thesis has the following aims and objectives:

- To formulate a research question and develop a research plan that includes a time management strategy.
- To learn relevant and theoretical insights into real problems.
- To generate new knowledge.
- To report research and results clearly and systematically.
- To assist you in your development as an academic and scholar and, if you wish, prepare you for writing a Ph.D. dissertation in the future.
- To broaden your understanding of a discipline that you can bring to your work setting.

### **Organization of a Thesis**

The thesis is organized into sections and chapters. The sections of the thesis follow both style and format rules. They include:

- Cover Page
- Title Page
- Approval Page
- Dedication
- Statement of the Author
- Biographical Sketch
- Acknowledgements
- Abbreviations and Acronyms
- Table of Contents
- List of Tables
- List of Figures
- Abstract

The chapters of the thesis include 1. Introduction, 2. Literature Review, 3. Methods, 4. Results and Discussion, 5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations, 6. References, and 7. Appendix. There may be a variation to these chapters among the universities in Ethiopia.

### **Cover Page**

The cover page is the first page of the thesis. Unless permitted by the university, the cover page does not include the university logo, photographs, tables, figures, or borders. Your university may ask that you print it on hard white card paper. Center the text. Include:

- Name of the university/college/faculty/school/department
- Thesis title
- Academic program area
- Full name of the student with degree(s) already earned
- Month and year submitted to the university
- Location of the university in Ethiopia

### **Title Page**

The title page is the second page of the thesis and includes:

- Name of the university/college/faculty/school/department
- Thesis title
- A thesis submitted to [university/college/faculty/school/department] in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree Master of [Arts/Science/Business Administration/ Public Health/other]
- Full name of the student with degree(s) already earned
- Names of advisors
- Date of submission
- Location of the university in Ethiopia

### **Approval Sheet**

The approval sheet is available from your college, faculty, institute, department, or school. These sheets can change annually so make sure your sheet current. Include the final approval sheet in your thesis after the examiners sign it. Document signing occurs after a successful thesis defense and only after all of the required revisions that arise from the oral defense are incorporated and confirmed by a designated internal or external examiner.

### **Dedication**

If included in the thesis, the dedication should be concise and ideally no more than one or two sentences long.

## **Statement of the Author**

On this page, the researcher declares that the thesis is entirely his or her work. Other's ideas and words have been properly cited. The researcher declares that the thesis or research has not been submitted to another institution for the award of a degree, diploma, or certificate.

## **Biographical Sketch**

The biographical sketch should be brief and include your birthplace, high schools, colleges, and universities attended. You may include a brief description of your professional work experience. The researcher may include a curriculum vitae (C.V.) as the last appendix. The C.V. should be current and properly edited for both content and English language. The C.V. in a thesis is generally abbreviated and no more than two pages in length.

## **Acknowledgements**

An acknowledgements page in a thesis is customary. It is usually no more than one-half page in length and recognizes the persons and institutions that assisted the thesis writer. If a university, governmental, or non-governmental agency has funded a portion of the thesis research, it is mentioned in this section. Agencies outside of the university should be provided a copy of the completed thesis with a note or appreciation.

In the public secular universities, do not acknowledge or thank religious deities. For example, praising and thanking Allah or Jesus Christ are not included in a thesis at a national university. However, in the religious universities, you may do so.

## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

You should list abbreviations and acronyms in alphabetical order. Other than Standard International (SI) Units, define each acronym and abbreviation in full when it is first used in the text. Explain any terminology that may not be familiar to the reader in the narrative. Follow the definition with an acronym or abbreviation in parentheses.

## **Table of Contents**

All headings and entries in the table of contents must correspond exactly in wording, font, and case with the headings and entries as they appear in the thesis narrative. The headings and subheadings in the table of contents should not exceed four levels. Use the built-in style of your word processor to create the table of contents. If it exceeds one page, write Table of Contents Continued in parentheses at the top of the page.

## **List of Tables**

These are the tables presented in the thesis. Be accurate with spelling, style, and formatting.

## **List of Figures**

These are the figures presented in the thesis.

## **List of Tables in the Appendix**

These are the tables presented in the appendix.

## **List of Figures in the Appendix**

These are the figures presented in the appendix.

## **Abstract**

An abstract highlights major points and describes the content and scope of the thesis. It reviews the thesis contents in an abbreviated format. It is ordinarily the first- and sometimes only- section read by readers and sets the tone for the thesis. It is an important piece of scholarly writing.

Most universities in Ethiopia require that the oral thesis defense candidate distribute his or her thesis abstract to all attendees at the beginning of the thesis defense. This distribution occurs immediately before the MS PowerPoint presentation and oral thesis defense.

Abstract length varies by discipline and university and college requirements. The typical length is between 100 to 500 words. It is rarely longer than a single page with the appropriate 1.5 line spacing, expected margins, and 12-point font size. Universities and colleges in Ethiopia use a style that omits citation from thesis abstracts and reserves citations for the narrative that follows.

The best way to write an abstract is to start with a draft of the completed thesis and follow these steps:

- State your hypothesis or methods.
- Identify the major objectives and conclusions.
- Identify phrases and keywords in the methods chapter.
- Identify major results from the discussion and results chapters.
- Assemble the above information into a single paragraph.
- Omit detailed descriptions of methods.
- Revise the paragraph so the one-page abstract conveys only essential information.
- Study previous well-written abstracts as samples.

- Ask your colleagues to review the abstract word-for-word for clarity of ideas and English language.

Center your name below the abstract title page. Then center the thesis title below your name.

### **Chapters of the Thesis**

Divide the thesis into chapters that include:

- Chapter 1. Introduction
- Chapter 2. Literature Review
- Chapter 3. Methods
- Chapter 4. Results and Discussion
- Chapter 5. Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations
- Chapter 6. References
- Chapter 7. Appendix

### **Introduction**

Prepare a draft of the introduction at the onset of thesis writing. Then, carefully refine the introduction after you have completed the thesis. This chapter is routinely about five pages in length. An extended introduction chapter is usually the result of an inappropriate mix of both introductory material and literature review data and statistics. The first page of the introduction begins with page 1.

A thesis introduction includes:

- Sufficient background information so the reader can understand the context and significance of the problem addressed.
- An acknowledgment of previous research work that you are building on.
- A statement of the problem with the gaps in research finding.
- Significance of the study.
- Scope of the work.
- Objectives of the study.

Focus on your thesis questions. All cited work should relate to the goal of the thesis. Do not summarize everything you have ever read on your subject. Do not divide the introduction into subchapters or divisions. Present the contents in a logical and well-organized manner to maintain a flow of ideas.

## **Literature Review**

The literature review is a critical analysis of existing knowledge on the research topic. Much of this chapter is derived from your thesis proposal. The review includes the strengths, limitations, gaps of previous studies, and justifies the need for the current research. This section must be relevant with recent citations. Ideally, most sources are from the past eight years. Use citations that are nine years and older only when necessary and for historical purposes.

Not all published material possesses the same research rigor, scholarship, or value. For this reason, you must evaluate your sources. Aside from the dates of publications, there are questions you can ask as you read and choose your references.

Who is the author? Learn the Ethiopian scholars who have published in your thesis area. Ethiopian universities have been developing scholars in all fields since the early years of Addis Ababa University in 1950 and Haramaya University in 1954. With the support of the Ethiopian federal government, the Ministry of Education has been creating universities throughout the country and students have been graduating from these universities with undergraduate and post-graduate degrees and expertise. Many Ethiopians have attended prestigious universities in European countries, Australia, Canada, and the United States. They have returned to share their expertise on university campuses. Know Ethiopia's experts and scholars. Reference them.

Who is the publisher? Not all publishers are equally academic or scholarly. A book that has been self-published does not carry the credence of an imprint of, say, Yale University Press. For journals, there are impact factor statistics to consider. Higher impact factors indicate that a journal's published findings are considered more highly influential. For example, *The Lancet*, a premier medical journal of the U.K. has a much higher impact factor than the *Pakistan Journal of Medical Sciences*. Learn more about this from the Internet and your thesis advisors. Also, the manuscript acceptance rates of journals vary dramatically and are, in part, related to scholarship and impact factors.

Are there bibliographies in the articles that you choose to cite and reference in your thesis? Do these bibliographies include editorials, opinion papers, news briefs, or evidence-based research studies? How extensive are the bibliographies? Are they current or do they list publications that are ten or more years old? You should be able to visit the sources. Importantly, the references you cite in your thesis must be scholarly and current.

Experienced thesis readers, thesis evaluators, and oral defense examiners often first read the thesis title, then the abstract, and then the references chapter contents. Although the references chapter may be some of the last pages of your thesis, the references are often first on their minds. They scrutinize the references to examine the authors, sources, types of published documents used, dates of the publications, and relevance to the thesis topic.

Citation transparency is required in theses. All citations and references should be complete with the style used by the university. The References chapter indicates both academic discipline and scholarship in the thesis researcher.

## **Methods**

The methods chapter presents the sources of data, methods, collection, and analysis procedures. The research has been completed, so use the past tense. Provide a concise description of the conditions of the investigation, materials, procedures, experimental designs, and techniques. You may divide the chapter into subheadings depending on the nature of the study.

Include the study area and calendar period, populations (source and study), sampling methods, data collection methods, study variables, quality control methods, data processing, analysis procedures, ethical considerations, and limitations. Restrict citations to data sources and references. Do not include a description of the results.

## **Results and Discussion**

Universities may require you to use Analysis and Interpretation rather than Results and Discussion in your theses. You should check with your advisors so chapter titles are written as required.

This part of the narrative interprets the results and analyses. Your university may allow you to present the results and discussion in separate chapters. Please check with your co-advisors.

In the results, present your findings without interpretation. Give primary results in clear sentences at the beginning of paragraphs. It is better to say “X had a significant positive relationship with Y” than to start with a less informative statement such as, “There was a significant relationship between X and Y.” Describe the nature of the findings and do not merely tell the reader whether they were significant or not. Avoid data repetition in tables and figures; however, when presenting data as a figure, you may show the raw data in the appendix. Focus the narrative for each table and figure on relevant observations and findings. The results narrative should be an objective report.

If you wish, divide the chapter with subheadings. Present your results and answer the research questions described in the introduction with sufficient detail.

Use the discussion chapter to describe the limitations and implications of the study. If you choose to write the results and discussion as one chapter, then follow the descriptions of major findings with appropriate interpretations and discussion. When writing the discussion as a separate chapter, synthesize the discussion to flow with the results chapter.

The organization of the discussion chapter is important, and the steps listed below will help you sort your thoughts:

- Construct the discussion from the specific to the general, i.e., the findings, to literature, to theory, to practice.

- Use the same key terms, verb tense, and perspective you used when posing the questions in the introduction.
- Begin by restating the hypothesis and answer the questions posed in the introduction.
- Support your answers with results. Explain how your results relate to expectations and relevant published literature. State why they are acceptable and how they are consistent with previously published knowledge on the topic.
- Address the results relating to the questions, regardless of whether or not the findings are significant.
- Describe the patterns, principles, and relationships of each major finding and result and put them in perspective. The sequencing of information is important. First, state the answer, then state the relevant results, and then cite the work of others. If necessary, direct the reader to a figure or table.
- Defend your answers. If necessary, explain why your answer is satisfactory and why others may not be. Your argument is convincing only when both sides are available for scrutiny.
- Discuss and evaluate conflicting results.
- Discuss any unexpected findings.
- Identify potential limitations and weaknesses and comment on the importance of these to your interpretation of the results and how they may affect the validity of the findings.
- Provide two or more recommendations for further research based on the research findings. The recommendations should correlate with the research findings.
- Explain how the results and conclusions influence the knowledge or understanding of the problem examined.

Results and discussions are conceptually different. In the discussion, you interpret the research results. A common mistake in the discussion is to present a sketchy interpretation that merely restates the results.

If the results differ from earlier published reports, explain why that may have happened. If the results agree with your expectations, then describe the reports and interpretations to support them. It is not adequate to just state whether the data agreed with earlier reports. Also, do not attempt to discuss every finding. Focus on the major findings that call for interpretation.

## **Summary, Conclusions, and Recommendations**

This chapter provides a brief account of the objectives, methods, and major findings. This chapter concludes and gives recommendations on such issues as organizational development, procedural concerns, educational matters, policy implications, and other relevant concerns. You may also list unanswered questions that require research beyond the limits of the thesis.

This chapter does not usually exceed five pages. Avoid citations of previous studies and references to tables or figures in the narrative or the appendix. Where required, you may refer to numerical and probability levels. You may divide the chapter into three logical sections.

Avoid bulleting of information in this chapter. Bulleting is considered a casual rather than scholarly writing technique. Do not just bullet and number in presenting your conclusions and recommendations. A narrative format is preferred with some limited bulleting if supported by the thesis advisors.

Recommendations from the research findings are an important facet of this chapter. Write your recommendations thoughtfully. What recommendations from your research findings can you make to practitioners and academicians in your field of study? How can your research findings contribute to knowledge in the discipline in Ethiopia, Africa, and globally? Any recommendations stated must be derived from the research findings conducted in the thesis research. Theses usually have two or more recommendations to offer the reader.

## **References**

The references chapter includes all publications and websites cited in the thesis. There should be a precise match between citations presented and the references. It is a common practice to check this match by thesis advisors, readers, and examiners. Does every citation in the thesis narrative have a reference?

Plan to use the APA or Vancouver style unless otherwise advised. Ensure that you present the references in the correct format. The thesis readers and evaluators expect the proper and consistent use of journal titles, commas, semicolons, periods, and dates for each. Complete references are required.

The Ethiopian and Western naming systems for persons are different and lead to confusion with references. With Western names, there is a first, middle, and last or surname (family name). Carefully present the surname with first and second name initials—i.e., Jones, T. R. Frequently, references in Ethiopian theses erroneously include surnames like Mary, Julia, John, and Steven. Please avoid this common error. Also, ask how the university wishes for Ethiopian names to be included in the references chapter. Note that many Ethiopian authors are now using their given name, father's name, and grandfather's first name in the reference listings. For example, Girma Ayalu Tena would be listed in the references. Check with the university.

Also, correctly state the proper titles of the national and international professional organizations, academic hard copy and online journals, and exact website addresses. You should state the access dates for website retrieval.

## **Appendix**

Thoughtfully prepare your appendix chapter. Be sure to include all documents that are discussed in the thesis proposal and, after that, used in conducting the research. These documents are included to support and supplement your research findings. Documents include, for example, questionnaires with translations, consent forms, photographs, and maps. Non-critical statistical tables and figures may be included. An appendix should be included only if it is mentioned in the thesis.

Appendices follow margin and font rules. They are paginated. Just as in the thesis proposal, number each appendix with a Roman numeral. Begin each appendix on a new page. An annex is not used in theses in Ethiopia.

## Part 4. Citations and References

A scholar credits other researcher and acknowledges their ideas and writings with citations and references. These strengthen your thesis discussion and arguments. Also, presenting ideas and quoting words by other authors allows your readers to pursue the sources. Cite sources accurately in your thesis. Importantly, the use of citations and references voids the accusation of plagiarism.

It is important to check with your thesis advisors and academic dean to determine which citation and reference style is required for your thesis as there are multiple styles utilized across the academic disciplines in a university.

The standard styles used are the American Psychological Association (APA), Vancouver, the Modern Language Association (MLA), Chicago/Turabian (CMS), American Medical Association (AMA), American Sociological Association (ASA), Oxford, and Harvard styles.

The most commonly used citation formats for theses, other academic papers, and national journals in Ethiopia are the APA, Vancouver, MLA, and CMS. The Vancouver style is applied in Ethiopia's public health and medicine publications.

There is no reason not to have letter-perfect citations and a flawless reference chapter. Exactness can be expected because there is a wealth of information on the Internet about each style that goes into detail on the citation formatting.

- APA – education, psychology, the sciences: <http://www.apastyle.org>
- Vancouver – [guide.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing/Vancouver](http://guide.lib.monash.edu/citing-referencing/Vancouver)
- MLA – humanities: <http://www.mla.org>
- CMS – business, history, the fine arts: <http://www.chicagoguidebookofstyle.org>

The following websites are from reputable universities that offer discussions and examples of the various styles, guiding you in your citation use.

- Purdue University (USA): <http://owl.english.purdue.edu>
- Texas Tech University (USA): [http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/1.2/inbox/mla\\_archive.html](http://english.ttu.edu/kairos/1.2/inbox/mla_archive.html)

Social sciences, arts, and humanities disciplines may require APA style for in-text citation and references in the writing of theses. The other colleges or schools, like public health and the hard sciences, may require the Vancouver style.

You will be using dozens of citations and references in the preparation of your thesis. Whenever possible, keep downloaded copies of all published documents and journal articles gathered for citation and reference use. These copies become a reference document for your narrative and citation and references.

## APA Style In-text Citation and Reference Examples

When using the APA style format, follow the author-date method of in-text citations. This means that the author's surname (last name) and the year of publication for the source appears in the text. An example is (Mengesha, 2017). A complete reference appears in the references chapter at the end of the thesis.

The references are listed in alphabetical order by the first letter of the surname. For example, Mengesha, T. would be listed in the references chapter before Sendeke, M.

### Journal Article (print)

In-text citation:

Mengesha (2017) researched...

or

... (Mengesha, 2017).

In the reference chapter page:

Mengesha, T.M. (2018) Research advances in adult-onset diabetes in northern Ethiopia. *East Afr Med J.*, 285, 648-650.

### Full text article with digital object identifier (DOI)

In-text citation:

Mengesha (2017) investigated...

or

... (Mengesha, 2017)

In the reference chapter page:

Mengesha, T.M. Adult onset diabetes in HIV-infected patients in Northern Ethiopia. *PLoS One Journal*. [Internet]. 2016. [cited April 2016]; n6 (1): e16049. IF 4.35. Available from: [www.plos.com](http://www.plos.com)

## Vancouver Style Examples

In applying the Vancouver style, citations are numbered in order with either round or square brackets, or superscript numbers. The numbers are consecutive in the order they appear in the text. Each citation corresponds to a numbered reference in the chapter. Once a source has been cited, the same number is used in all subsequent references. No distinction is made between print and electronic references when citing within the text.

In-text citation:

Mengesha (1) suggested that...

In the reference chapter page:

1. Mengesha, T. Ethiopia's Diabetes Prevention Program Research Group. Diabetes, insulin, and proinsulin in participants with impaired glucose tolerance. *Hypertension*.

2016;40(5):679-86.

3. Mengesha, T. Effectiveness of the national diabetes prevention program in Ethiopia. *Eth Med J* [Internet] 2016 [cited 2017 Jun 29]; 26(2):131-5. Available from: <http://www.emaemj/article.asp?issn=09709290; year=2017, volume=26; issue=2; spage=131; epage=135; aulast=Mengesha>

The correct and consistent application of a citation and reference style in a thesis can be tedious and time-consuming. It is, however, necessary for a successful thesis. This area is one of the most frequently mentioned criticisms in an oral thesis defense by the evaluation committee members and others in attendance. This criticism can be avoided with careful action. Ideally, you will submit a thesis that is letter-perfect. This is a sign of a disciplined writer.

## **Part 5. Ethics and Thesis Submission**

When we hear the word ethics, we usually think of moral principles or virtues that govern our behavior. We each have a moral code or value system that we live by in our personal lives, with our families, our professional lives, and as students.

As a master's student, please view ethics as a serious topic for consideration. Ethics is a cornerstone of conducting research and writing about your research. Two major ethical issues involve data honesty and accuracy in citations and references.

### **Data Integrity**

Thesis data may be collected, for example, from completing dozens of questionnaires, personal interviews, focus group discussions, observations, check lists, laboratory tests, or records reviews. It can be exhausting, but all require data integrity and honesty.

A revised questionnaire for data collection requires hours of work to construct. There are always concerns about the primary source, reliability, validity, and translations. Give credit to the source of your questionnaire, even if tailored to your project. What is the origin of the questionnaire? Have you conducted any reliability testing? These questions frequently arise in oral thesis defenses.

As an ethical researcher, you want to ensure interviews are conducted completely and by the procedures approved in your thesis proposal. Have you followed all protocols?

If interviews are conducted, and forms are used for data collection, keep the documents even after the thesis is approved. In instances where study subjects are asked to sign a consent form and complete a written questionnaire, we suggest you keep these documents. We suggest you keep all data collected for a period of six months after the approval of the thesis for possible reference.

We encourage you to record your interviews and focus group discussions. These are the primary source of data files for reference. Should a thesis advisor or an oral defense committee member wish to view or listen to these files, you will have the files available. These validate your work.

### **Accuracy in Citations and References**

Citations assure readers of the accuracy of facts presented by the thesis researcher. By providing a source, a reader can judge fact reliability and even check the published sources if they wish.

Citations give recognition to other researchers for your research and depending on the thesis topic, the readers and thesis evaluators may know Ethiopian scholars by reputation and publication. Are they included? Cite the works of prominent scholars in Ethiopia and give credit to their research. Often, the readers will examine the bibliography to look for these scholars.

## **Plagiarism Avoidance**

Plagiarism is unethical. It is intellectual theft and academic dishonesty. You may plagiarize intentionally or unintentionally, but regardless of intention, it is theft. Plagiarism occurs when a student submits the written work of another person as his or her work on a thesis proposal or a thesis.

The accusation and verification of plagiarism is a severe ethical matter in academe. For the thesis writer, it can lead to a complete do-over of a thesis on a different topic or even expulsion from the university.

With care, plagiarism is easy to avoid.

- Do not cut and paste passages into your work from the Internet or published sources. Often, the writing style of the borrowed work varies significantly from the researcher's language, making it easily identifiable.
- Be careful with paraphrasing—retyping a sentence or passage from a published source and replacing a few words to make the passage just different enough to personally claim authorship. Always cite your sources. Detection websites can pick up as little as a phrase of several words or a sentence.
- If you use the exact words of a source, ensure you put the words in quotation marks or a block quotation.
- Do not borrow a thesis and use the contents as your own. Your work should be original.

To guard against inadvertent plagiarism, keep careful notes and records of sources. You may wish to print the page and highlight the words, phrases, or sentences you wish to use. Notetaking is a time-honored activity, but it is a slow and laborious process.

## **Detection Websites for Plagiarism**

Plagiarism detection websites make it straightforward and easy to improve your ethical writing practice. These Internet-based tools examine billions of online and uploaded hard copy and online publications. Unintended Internet plagiarism is common, and these detection websites help you to avoid the practice.

We encourage that you use at least one of these websites to assist you with your citations and references. As of 2018, the five most highly regarded and popular plagiarism detection sites used by both university faculty members and students in the United States are:

- BibMe
- Grammarly
- PaperRater
- Plagiarisma
- Turnitin

In document study, the detection websites identify the complete source, including the verbatim words, the author(s), date of publication, and the website of the original writing. The passages identified can be as short as a few sentences or lengthy paragraphs.

Sites like BibMe and Grammarly offer both free and premium level applications and memberships. The premium levels provide additional assistance with your writing and assist with automated proofreading, and grammar and spelling error identification. They may suggest ways for improving the text. New plagiarism detection sites are developed every year, and you are encouraged to check for them.

### **Thesis Submission**

Format the title pages in the same manner shown in the guidebook sample pages. There should be no borders, no mix of font types, any photos, tables or artwork on the cover or the title pages. Follow the rules of capitalization, font size, margins, spacing, page numbering, bolding, indentation, and presentation of tables and figures. Have your thesis advisor and co-advisor proofread and edit your thesis for content, style, formatting, and English language usage. Provide your advisors a soft copy and a hard copy of your thesis for ease in reading and reference checking. Plan ahead.

- Have a native English language speaker review your thesis for language. Please give this colleague at least a day or two to carefully read and comment on the English language usage.
- Use Spelling and Grammar check software to ensure there are no misspellings or grammar errors in the thesis.
- Carefully identify the numbers and names of the chapters.
- Check all in-text citations for completeness and formatting.
- Present each reference in the references chapter in the proper format. As mentioned previously, give special care to Western surnames and the spelling of these names. It is becoming a practice for Ethiopian authors to use their given first name, father's name, and grandfather's name in publications without the use of initials. Please check with your university for appropriate use of Ethiopian names in the references chapter.

As the due date for submission approaches, give your thesis advisors a week or more to study your final document so they can identify last-minute problems for you to revise. Your thesis must be delivered by the university to the internal and external examiners in advance; these examiners need time to study the thesis in preparation for the scheduled oral thesis defense.

Submit the thesis early or on time. Respect your advisors and their time. Please recognize that a thesis submitted after the formal due date, regardless of the many compelling reasons for the delay, may lead to delays in advisor approval. There may then be a delay in distribution to the examiners and with the oral thesis defense.

Historically, theses submitted by master's degree students after the university's official due date are often seriously flawed. This is perhaps due to inadequate planning, last-minute writing, and a rushed completion.

Flaws in late theses are identified in organization, chapter contents, writing, style, and formatting. Sadly, thesis evaluators often issue marginal grades at the oral thesis defense for these theses. Significant thesis re-writing is not uncommon after the oral thesis defense. Refer to your personal calendar and plan ahead for timely submission.

## **Part 6. Oral Thesis Defense**

If you are like students before you, memories of your oral thesis defense will stay with you for decades. Make them happy memories through serious preparation before and on the day of your oral defense.

The oral thesis defense is the climax of your thesis writing and master's degree studies. It is a rite of passage, and your performance reflects on you, your thesis advisors, the program, and university.

Students who carefully prepare have successful oral thesis defenses. The thesis is ready for evaluation. The abstract is letter-perfect for distribution to all seated in the defense. The MS PowerPoint presentation is organized and the slides readable. The laptop computer is functioning. The student demonstrates a knowledge of the thesis content and does not read cluttered hard-to-read slides. The student had already observed thesis defenses and understands the ritual and is ready.

### **Before the Oral Defense**

Learn the defense ritual at your university. What are the procedures and expectations? The most effective way to learn the ritual is to attend thesis defenses of your colleagues. It is not premature to observe defenses by the students finishing before you. Learn from their successes and mistakes.

Confirm the day, time, and location of your defense in advance. Oral defense schedules are usually posted in the postgraduate offices and colleges a week or more before the event. Confirm with the program director.

Learn the time allocated to your defense. You should know exactly how much time you are allowed for your presentation. Most oral defenses are twenty minutes followed by ten minutes of questions by the thesis evaluation committee members and those in attendance. Do not go under or over the time allotment. Practice your presentation, so you adhere to the time constraint.

Prepare a well-written abstract for the committee and all in attendance. You may need as many as twenty-five copies. While the evaluation committee members have a copy of your thesis, the attendees will not. The abstract helps all in knowing the content of your thesis.

In the days before the defense, prepare an effective and attractive MS PowerPoint presentation of approximately fifteen slides for major presentation points. Limit your introductory slides. The slides should encapsulate the study and focus on methods, most salient findings, and recommendations.

In preparing the presentation, ask yourself: "What do I want colleagues to know about my thesis?" "What is the most important information that I can present?" Navigate the committee and attendees through a logical, point-by-point sequence of information that builds to the conclusion in a clear and focused direction.

Too often, the MS PowerPoint slide presentations for oral defenses are poorly prepared. Avoid this problem.

- Make slides readable to those the back of the room. Use large, dark-colored font.
- Make tables and charts readable to all.
- Use bullets with words and phrases. Avoid complete sentences. You are not reading your oral thesis defense.
- Include at least two recommendations.
- Anticipate questions. Questions will include, for example, statistical test choice, sampling methods, data interpretation, confidentiality issues, and English language problems.

### **On the Oral Thesis Defense Day**

The day of the oral thesis defense can be nerve-racking. However, if you have prepared, you can present with confidence. Anticipate a successful defense by following the following suggestions:

- Dress professionally as this is an important and memorable day.
- Arrive early to your defense classroom or auditorium.
- Speak clearly.
- If necessary, use a microphone for all to hear you.
- Speak with authority as you are the expert on your topic.
- Have a hard copy of your thesis in your hands for questions about the contents and language in the thesis. The defense examiners will ask for clarifications in the document.
- Be sure that your laptop computer and MS PowerPoint presentation are functional. Test the laptop and the file before the actual defense.
- Have an adequate number of abstracts to distribute to all persons attending your oral defense.

### **Thesis Approval**

After you have completed the presentation and answered questions, you will be asked to leave the room with all attendees. The oral defense evaluation committee meets for approximately 30 minutes to evaluate both the thesis scholarship and the oral defense. Depending on the university, the grades range from outstanding, excellent, good, weak, to failing.

Rarely is a thesis approved in its entirety at the oral thesis defense. Rewriting and language corrections are always required by the oral thesis defense evaluation committee. This committee may require limited, moderate, or even major rewriting of the thesis for acceptance. The requirements are noted by the committee and provided to you. The changes must be completed before thesis approval and signatures.

The thesis is signed only when all of the required rewriting has been completed and confirmed. An evaluator will be asked to confirm that the changes are made before submission. Please do not ask for signatures of approval to a thesis that has not been carefully studied and approved by the thesis defense examiners.

### **Follow-through**

Check with the university program academic office for the necessary number and type of bound copies required for submission to the university. Bindings must conform to university guidelines. One of the copies will be placed in the university library. You may wish to have two or more personal copies for future reference.

## **Part 7. Sample Pages**

Use these sample pages as guides for appropriate content, font, and spacing:

- Abbreviations and Acronyms
- Table of Contents
- Statement of the Author
- List of Tables
- Thesis Proposal Page
- Thesis Cover Page
- Thesis Title Page
- Thesis Approval Page

## Abbreviations and Acronyms

### **ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

ARH	Adolescent reproductive health
ART	Antiretroviral therapy
BCG	Bacillus Calmette-Guerin
BCC	Behavioral Change Communication
EPHA	Ethiopian Public Health Association
EPI	Expanded Program on Immunization
EBF	Exclusive breast feeding
FP	Family planning
HAI	Hospital acquired infection
LBW	Low birth weight
OI	Opportunistic infection
RH	Reproductive health

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Statement of the Author

**STATEMENT OF THE AUTHOR**

By my signature below, I declare that this thesis is my work. I have followed all ethical principles of scholarship in the preparation, data collection, data analysis, and completion of this thesis. I have given all scholarly matter recognition through accurate citations and references. I affirm that I have cited and referenced all sources used in this thesis. I have made every effort to avoid plagiarism.

I submit this thesis in partial fulfillment of the requirement for a degree from this university. This thesis is available from the university library to borrowers under the rules of the library. I declare that I have not submitted this thesis to any other institution for the award of an academic degree, diploma, or certificate.

Scholars may use brief quotations from this thesis without special permission if they make an accurate and complete acknowledgment of the source. The department head or dean of the academic unit may grant permission for extended quotations or reproduction of this thesis. In all other instances, however, the author of the thesis must grant permission.

Name:

Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date:

Academic Unit:

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Thesis Proposal Page

**ADDIS ABABA UNIVERSITY  
COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND ECONOMICS  
ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

**BUSINESS STRATEGIES PRACTICED BY SUCCESSFUL LARGE PRIVATE  
SERVICE ENTERPRISES IN BISHOFTU, ETHIOPIA**

**MBA THESIS PROPOSAL**

**BETHLEHEM AMSALE (B.A.)**

**JULY 2014**

**ADDIS ABABA, ETHIOPIA**

Thesis Cover Page

**MEKELLE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GENDER, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**ETHIOPIAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATTITUDES  
TO MARRIAGE AND FAMILY SIZE IN MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA**

**Master of Arts Degree**

**Yabsira Hailemariam (B.A.)**

**May 2017**

**Mekelle, Ethiopia**

Thesis Title Page

**MEKELLE UNIVERSITY  
INSTITUTE OF GENDER, ENVIRONMENT AND DEVELOPMENT STUDIES**

**ETHIOPIAN MALE HIGH SCHOOL STUDENT ATTITUDES TO MARRIAGE AND  
FAMILY SIZE IN MEKELLE, ETHIOPIA**

**A Thesis submitted to the Institute of Gender, Environment and Development Studies**

**In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master of Arts (M.A.) Degree**

Yabsira Hailemariam (B.A.)

**Advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Co-advisor:** \_\_\_\_\_  
**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ (G.C.)

**May 2017**

**Mekelle, Ethiopia**

Thesis Approval Page

**THESIS APPROVAL PAGE**

**UNIVERSITY OF GONDAR**

Contraceptive Use and Risk of Pregnancy among Undergraduate

Students at the University of Hawassa, Ethiopia

Submitted by

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Student

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

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Date

Approved by Thesis Examining Board

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Name of Examiner

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Signature

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Name of Co-Advisor

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Signature

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Date

Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Dean

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date