



THE DOCTORAL THESIS PROPOSAL GUIDELINE

*A Standardized Manual for Candidate Execution &
Supervisory Evaluation*

**Doctoral Research Guidance Manual Series (2026)
Academic Division**

1.TITLE PAGE STRUCTURE

The Title Page serves as the formal entry point to your doctoral manuscript and establishes its structural and professional tone. It is critical that this page includes the exact parameters required by the graduate evaluation board to avoid administrative delays prior to processing.

Every proposal cover template must rigorously incorporate the following metadata elements:

- **The Research Title:** Must be concise, impact-driven, and highly reflective of the precise focus of the study. Avoid vague or over-generalized wording; instead, clearly indicate the core structural variables or phenomena under observation, the target industry setting, and the operational domain.
- **Candidate Credentials:** Clear declaration of your full legal name, doctoral candidate registration numbers, current enrollment status, and institutional affiliation.
- **Supervisory Alignment:** Explicitly state the full names, designations, and academic titles of your appointed thesis supervisor(s) or administrative advisory panel.

2.INTRODUCTION

The introductory chapter sets the stage for your research, establishing a logical funnel that connects macro-level industry challenges down to your precise research scope. It dictates the underlying structural relevance of your topic.

I. .Background of the Study

Introduce the foundational corporate context, industry challenges, or macroeconomic trends underpinning your topic. This section should use high-quality, up-to-date statistics, reliable industry reports, and concrete corporate case examples to prove that this specific issue represents an active, priority concern for contemporary business leaders.

II. Research Problem

Clearly articulate the specific business problem and the parallel gap in professional knowledge. You must convincingly demonstrate two critical dimensions: first, that a severe operational disruption or corporate issue currently exists in practice, and second, that current academic and practitioner literature lacks an actionable solution to resolve it.

III. Aim / Overarching Purpose

State the ultimate goal of your study in one or two sentences. This must clarify the final destination of this research and state exactly what overarching dilemma the document will resolve.

IV. Research Questions

Formulate clear, highly focused questions that your empirical study will answer. These questions must link directly to your problem statement. For professional doctorates, keep them focused on real-world scenarios and avoid overly abstract or purely speculative inquiries.

V. Research Objectives

Define the specific, measurable, and logical steps your research project will execute to achieve its overall aim. In advanced professional doctorates, these objectives must bridge theory and execution, including highly actionable goals that industry practitioners can directly apply to drive organizational improvement.

VI. Significance of the Study

Explicitly justify the value and novelty of your research. Clearly outline who the key stakeholders are (such as specific business operations units, industry practitioners, or regional policy-makers) and describe exactly how your final findings will improve current leadership models, strategic decision-making, or operational policy frameworks.

VII. Scope of the Study

Establish the clear operational boundaries and parameters of your project. Define these limitations explicitly across four specific dimensions: geography, industry/business sector, target organizational size, and study timeframe. Provide a strong academic justification for why these boundaries are necessary to maintain focus.

VIII. Limitation of the Study

This study was conducted within certain limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings.

a) Geographical Limitation

The study was confined to a specific geographical area, institution, or population, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other contexts or regions.

b) Time Constraint

The research was conducted within a limited time frame. A longer study period may have provided additional insights and more comprehensive results.

c) **Sample Size**

The study utilized a specific sample size based on accessibility and available resources. Therefore, the findings may not fully represent the entire target population.

d) **Data Collection Method**

The research relied primarily on survey questionnaires, interviews, or secondary data sources. Responses provided by participants may have been influenced by personal perceptions, biases, or willingness to disclose information.

e) **Resource Constraints**

Financial, technological, and logistical limitations restricted the scope of data collection and analysis.

f) **External Factors**

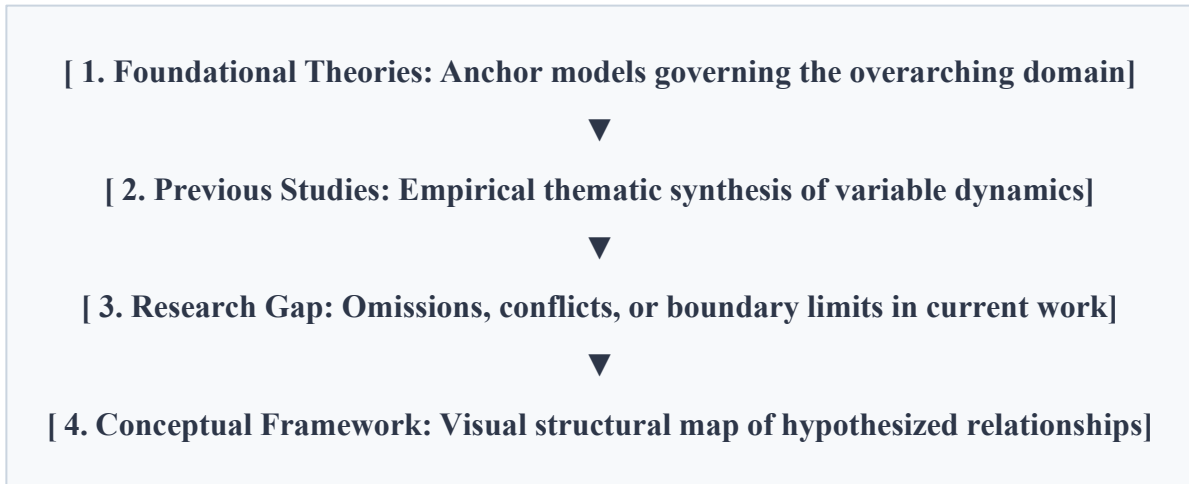
Unforeseen environmental, economic, social, or organizational factors beyond the researcher's control may have influenced the study outcomes.

g) **Scope of Variables**

The study focused only on selected variables relevant to the research objectives. Other potentially influential factors were not examined and may warrant further investigation.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review is a critical, analytical evaluation of past academic and professional management writing. It serves as an argumentative platform to justify why your specific research design is necessary.



I. Theoretical Foundation

Identify and critically evaluate the established academic theories that anchor your study (such as the Resource-Based View, Institutional Theory, or Transaction Cost Economics). Explain exactly how these existing frameworks provide lenses to interpret the corporate behaviors or relationships you are investigating.

II. Previous Studies

Synthesize past empirical findings related to your core variables. Group prior research *thematically* rather than listing papers individually. Compare, contrast, and challenge their methodologies, geographical contexts, sample sizes, and empirical conclusions.

III. Research Gap

Isolate the exact boundaries where past studies reached their limits. Clearly identify what remains unaddressed whether it is an empirical omission, a contextual/geographic limitation, a distinct methodological bias, or a set of contradictory findings in the current body of knowledge.

IV. Conceptual Framework

Construct a clear visual diagram mapping out the hypothesized relationships between your independent, dependent, mediating, or moderating variables based on your literature synthesis.

V. Hypothesis Formulation

For quantitative designs, deduce testable statements directly from the conceptual framework. Each hypothesis must be theoretically grounded and state a specific, directionally measurable relationship between variables.

4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This section explains how you will gather and analyze data to answer your research questions, proving your design is the most effective fit for solving the research problem.

Research Philosophy

Declare your epistemological and ontological positioning (such as Positivism, Interpretivism, or Pragmatism). This dictates how you view knowledge and justifies your choice of research methods.

Research Approach

Specify whether your research will follow a deductive path (theory-testing, typically quantitative) or an inductive path (theory-building, typically qualitative).

Research Design

Clearly outline your overarching operational blueprint. Specify whether you will use a quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods design, along with your specific research subtype (such as cross-sectional survey, multiple-case study, or business experiment).

Target Population

Define the complete set of cases, organizations, or individuals from which your sample will be drawn. Specify clear inclusion and exclusion criteria based on your study's scope

Sampling Technique & Sample Size

Detail your exact strategy for selecting participants (such as probability sampling for quantitative rigor, or non-probability sampling like purposive sampling for qualitative depth). Provide a clear statistical or theoretical justification for your sample size.

Data Collection Instruments

Explain the precise tools and mechanisms you will use to collect data (such as validated survey instruments, semi-structured interview protocols, or secondary financial data databases).

Data Analysis Plan

Detail the exact methods you will use to process your raw data. For quantitative studies, specify your statistical testing models (such as Multiple Regression or Structural Equation Modeling via Smart PLS/ SPSS). For qualitative research, detail your coding steps and thematic analysis tools.

Ethical Considerations

Address the essential ethical obligations of your project. Detail how you will secure informed consent, guarantee participant anonymity and corporate confidentiality, store data securely, and protect vulnerable stakeholders.

5. RESEARCH SCHEDULE (TIMELINE)

A Doctoral Proposal must demonstrate strong project management feasibility. Provide a detailed timeline mapping out your milestone's month-by-month across the execution lifecycle of your degree.

Milestone I: Proposal Presentation (Month 6)

Candidates formalize an abstract outlining their chosen strategic domain. The Doctoral Panel then coordinates the matching of a Primary Academic Supervisor and an Expert Industry Co-Supervisor.

Milestone III: Final Submission (Month 36+)

The ultimate evaluation step consists of an open technical presentation followed by a demanding questioning session conducted by one Internal Reviewer and two independent External Examiners.

Milestone II: Progressive (Month 12–14)

A comprehensive research proposal spanning chapters 1–3 (Core Problem Definition, Systematic Literature Exploration, and Methodology Architecture) must be defended before an authorized three-member academic panel.

6. REFERENCES (APA 7TH EDITION)

All academic and corporate sources cited throughout your proposal must be listed here, strictly formatted using the latest APA citation style (7th Edition).

Supervisor's Editorial Standard: *To ensure your review carries true doctoral weight, aim for an 80/20 balance: at least 80% of your citations should come from top-tier, peer-reviewed journals published within the last 5 rolling years, supplemented by relevant high-level industry reports to anchor your real-world business context.*

7. APPENDICES

Include any supplementary materials necessary to verify the readiness and ethical compliance of your project without cluttering the main body text:

Appendix A: Data Collection Instruments - Full drafts of questionnaires, observation sheets, or semi-structured interview protocols.

Appendix B: Gatekeeper Access Letters - Signed institutional consent forms and corporate participant clearance templates.

Appendix C: Technical Attachments - Supporting statistical pilots, comprehensive baseline calculations, or extensive secondary documentation.

9.EXPECTATIONS FOR A DBA DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

- ☑ **Business Relevance:** A DBA proposal must focus on real-world business problems and practical solutions.
- ☑ **Impactful Contributions:** Clearly define how the study will improve business practices, policies, or leadership.
- ☑ **Applied Research Focus:** The research should be practitioner-oriented, emphasizing actionable recommendations.
- ☑ **Engagement with Business Leaders:** Consider discussions with industry experts, executives, or policy-makers to refine your research direction

10.THESIS FORMATTING GUIDELINES

- **Font:** Times New Roman, 12 pt
- **Spacing:** Single-spaced
- **Margins:** 1.5-inch on all sides
- **Alignment:** Justified-aligned text
- **Citation Style:** Latest APA format

11.FINAL CHECKLIST BEFORE SUBMISSION

Is the operational problem clearly defined and highly relevant to professional practitioners within the domain?

- *What it assesses:* Whether the candidate has identified a real-world, localized disruption, systemic issue, or practical vulnerability that directly affects working professionals, institutional output, or organizational performance.

Does the literature review critically analyze current professional practices, institutional frameworks, and foundational theories?

- *What it assesses:* Whether the review moves past passive description to actively evaluate the boundary conditions, context, and flaws of existing models, demonstrating exactly where current evidence fails to provide a solution to the practical problem.

Is the research methodology rigorous, actionable, and explicitly suited for applied professional implementation?

- *What it assesses:* Whether the chosen design (qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods) can realistically be executed within an active workplace or clinical environment, respecting operational constraints while maintaining data integrity.

Does the proposal align comprehensively with advanced practitioner-scholar and professional doctoral expectations?

- *What it assesses:* Whether the project balances methodological rigor with immediate actionable utility, ensuring the final output delivers a tangible framework, strategy, or policy change for the profession rather than a purely abstract contribution to theory.

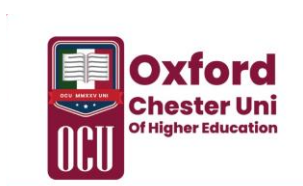
12. SUBMISSION METHOD

- Submit the abstract, proposal, Presentation, chapters and research through two methods:
- Online submission via this LMS
- Electronically via email to - academichead@ocuni.edu.lk

13. FORMAT OF PRESENTATION

- Submit both the research summary and the form through two methods:
- Presenters are allowed to use a maximum of 10 slides presentation.
- Presenters are allowed 15 minutes presentation with a 5 minutes Q & A session
- The student should make a 20-minute final presentation with following subsections of the research before the submission of final draft report.
 - Thesis Title
 - Brief Introduction
 - Problem statement in brief
 - Objectives of the study
 - Research Methodology
 - Data Analysis
 - Research Results with discussions
 - Conclusions and recommendations
 - Final Conclusion and Findings
 - Appendix

PRESENTATION BACKGROUND



Oxford Chester Uni Of Higher Education Sri Lanka

Program	Doctor of Business Administration
Module Name	Proposal Presentation
Module Code	
Reg: Number	

