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كلية الصيدلة
Department of Pharmacognosy
College of Pharmacy

جامعــة الأمـير سطام بن عبد العزيز
PRINCE SATTAM BIN ABDULAZIZ UNIVERSITY

Master program of Pharmaceutical Sciences/ Assessment and Applications of Phytotherapeutic Drugs

Guidelines for the preparation of a Research Plan for Master's Thesis

(TRANSLATED BY THE DEPARTMENT OF PHARMACOGNOSY FROM THE UNIVERSITY GUIDELINES)

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Introduction:

The university thesis is a scientific research project that must be conducted according to academic methodology and standards. It aims to meet the requirements for earning a specific academic degree. Since scientific theses are a form of academic research, they must adhere to correct scientific principles to achieve their ultimate goal, which is to provide specific outcomes related to a particular phenomenon.

The first stage is the development of the **Research Plan (Proposal)**, considered a crucial step in preparing a Master's thesis. The research plan defines the project's future direction, outlining the steps the researcher will follow, which ultimately helps in reaching the expected results.

From this standpoint, the Department of Pharmacognosy at the College of Pharmacy is pleased to provide this procedural guide for preparing a research plan for Master's students. This guide serves as a reference for students during all the stages of developing their research plan, adhering to the academic standards and procedures followed in the Pharmacognosy Department at the College of Pharmacy. The guide is in line with the University's Regulations for Graduate Studies and its executive rules.

Key Terms in the Guide:

1. **Regulations**: The Regulations for Graduate Studies at the University and their Executive Rules at the University.

2. **Researcher**: The Master's student in the Pharmacognosy Department at the College of Pharmacy.

3. **Scientific Supervisor**: A faculty member appointed by the Pharmacognosy Department to supervise the thesis after the research plan is approved by the relevant councils.

4. **Research Plan**: The written outline of the research project that must be prepared by graduate students, following specific scientific guidelines and approved by the department and college councils.

5. **Research Plan Revision Committee**: A specialized committee responsible for reviewing and following up on modifications to the Master's research plans.

Essential Notifications:

1. Students must submit their research plan only after completing at least 50% of the coursework in the Master of Pharmaceutical Sciences/Assessment and Applications of Phytotherapeutic Drugs program with a cumulative GPA not less than Very Good.

2. The Pharmacognosy Department assigns an Academic Advisor to the student at the beginning of their enrollment in the Master's program to guide them through selecting a thesis topic and preparing a research plan.

3. The Department Council proposes the thesis supervisor, which must be approved by the College Council and the Deanship of Graduate Studies. Ideally, the Academic Advisor should be the thesis supervisor, as long as there is no conflict of specialization.

Formal and Substantive Requirements for the Research Plan

Formal Requirements:

1. **Research Plan Cover**: Follow as outlined in Appendix 2.

2. **Margins**: Set the margins as follows: 2.5 cm from the top, bottom, and left, and 3.5 cm from the right (see Appendix 3 for details).

3. **Font**:

   o **Arabic Text**: Use **Traditional Arabic** (Main Titles: Bold, 20 pts; Subtitles: Bold, 18 pts; Body Text: 16 pts).

   o **English Text**: Use **Times New Roman** (Body Text: 14 pts; Footnotes: 12 pts).

4. **Line Spacing**: The text should be 1.5 spaced, with paragraphs spaced consistently throughout the document.

5. **Pagination**: Pages must be numbered at the top left corner of the page. The cover page should not display a page number.

Substantive Requirements:

1. **Research Title**: It should include the main variables of the study and be closely related to the central research question or hypothesis. The title must be specific, concise, and free of vague or redundant words.

2. **Introduction**: The introduction should gradually transition from general to specific, clearly presenting the research problem supported by theoretical concepts and findings from previous studies.

3. **Research Problem**: The research problem must be well-defined and focused, with references to credible sources (statistics, reports, previous studies).

4. **Research Hypotheses**: The hypotheses can be framed as null or alternative hypotheses, depending on the nature of the relationship between the variables under study.

5. **Research Objectives**: The objectives should be clear, measurable, and aligned with the research title and problem, focusing on the expected outcomes of the study.

Stages of Submitting the Research Plan:

1. **Stage 1**: Present the research idea to the Research Plan Revision Committee within the Pharmacognosy Department for approval of the research title and initiation of the study.

2. **Stage 2**: Submit the research plan to the department, signed by the Academic Advisor assigned by the Department Council.

3. **Stage 3**: Present the research plan in a seminar or before a department-assigned committee for review.

4. **Stage 4**: The Department Council reviews and approves the research plan.

5. **Stage 5**: Upon approval, the department proposes the name of the thesis supervisor, and the plan moves forward for approval by the College Council and the Deanship of Graduate Studies.

Key Requirements for the Research Plan

First: Formal Requirements

These refer to the necessary formal elements related to the overall design of the research plan, such as font characteristics, margins, and citation methods:

1. **Cover Page Contents**: The cover should follow the format specified in Appendix 2.

2. **Margins**: The margins should be set to 2.5 cm from the top, bottom, and left sides of the page, and 3.5 cm from the right side, as outlined in Appendix 3.

3. **Page Numbering**: The numbering of pages should start from the first page of the introduction, and appendices should be numbered separately.

4. **Font Types**:

   o   For Arabic text, use Traditional Arabic: Main titles (Bold, 20 pt), Subtitles (Bold, 18 pt), and Body text (16 pt).

   o   For English text, use Times New Roman: Main text (14 pt) and footnotes (12 pt).

5. **Spacing**: The text should be double-spaced for better readability, with a space of 1.5 between lines in the body of the text.

6. **Page Layout**: Pages should not have frames, and no text should be placed outside the margin boundaries.

7. **Citations**: Follow the APA 7th edition style for citations and references, as described in Appendix 1.

Second: Substantive Requirements (Elements of the Research Plan)

These are the core elements that must be included in the content of the research plan, addressing the topic and purpose of the research.

1. **Research Title**:
   The title must include the primary variables of the study, be clear, specific, and aligned with the main research question or hypothesis. It should be concise, linguistically correct, and free from ambiguity or redundant terms.

2. **Introduction**:
   The introduction should begin broadly and narrow down to the specific research topic. It should include background information, theoretical concepts, and prior research findings relevant to the topic, ending with a clear statement of the research problem.

3. **Research Problem**:
   The research problem should be well-defined and supported by evidence, such as statistics, reports, and findings from previous studies. Any gaps in the literature or the importance of addressing the research problem must be highlighted.

4. **Research Hypotheses/Questions**:

   o **Hypothesis**: The hypothesis may be stated in either affirmative or null form, depending on the study's nature and whether it aims to explore differences between independent variables or their impact on dependent variables.

   o **Research Questions**: In some cases, the research may be driven by questions. These should be logically ordered and clearly tied to the research problem.

5. **Research Objectives**:
   The objectives should be clearly defined, realistic, measurable, and directly linked to the

   research problem. They should be written as specific statements that outline what the study aims to achieve.

6. **Significance of the Research**:
   This section should highlight the potential scientific and practical value of the research, showing how it contributes to existing knowledge and addresses a gap in the field. It should also mention any potential applications or solutions that the research might offer.

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7. **Definition of Terms**:
This section should provide concise definitions of the key terms and variables used in the research, ensuring clarity for the reader. Operational definitions should also be included, describing how these terms will be measured or interpreted within the study.

8. **Research Boundaries**:
The researcher should clearly define the scope of the study, including its limitations in terms of time, location, and subject matter, as well as any constraints related to the target population.

9. **Previous Studies**:
A summary of previous research relevant to the topic should be provided, highlighting the similarities and differences between the current study and prior work. The summary should be presented in chronological order and conclude with a reflection on how the current study builds on or differs from previous findings.

Methodology and Procedures:

1. **Research Methodology**:
The methodology section should clearly state the research design (e.g., experimental, descriptive, etc.), the target population, and the data collection methods. It should also specify the tools used for data collection and their validity and reliability.

2. **Research Sample**:
Describe how the sample was selected, its size, and the criteria for inclusion. If a survey or experimental design is used, mention the tool or procedure for data collection.

3. **Data Analysis**:
The researcher must explain the statistical or qualitative methods used to analyze the data, along with any software or tools applied.

References and Appendices:

1. **References**:
All references used in the research plan must follow the APA 7th edition format, as outlined in Appendix 1. References should be listed at the end of the research plan, and all in-text citations must correspond to this list.

2. **Appendices**:
Any supplementary materials, such as data collection instruments or additional background information, should be placed in appendices. Each appendix should be numbered separately, with a title that corresponds to its content.

Stages of Research Plan Submission:

1. **Stage 1: Presenting the Research Idea**
The student presents the research idea to the Research Plan Revision Committee in the Pharmacognosy Department for approval. Upon approval, the student can proceed with drafting the research plan.

2. **Stage 2: Submitting the Research Plan**
The research plan must be submitted to the department, signed by the Academic Advisor appointed by the Pharmacognosy Department.

3. **Stage 3: Seminar Presentation**
The research plan must be presented, where it will be reviewed by a departmental committee assigned to evaluate research plans.

4. **Stage 4: Department Council Review**
The Pharmacognosy Department will review the research plan and forward its recommendations to the College Council for approval.

5. **Stage 5: Approval of Supervisor**
If the research plan is approved, the Department Council will propose a Supervisor, and the plan will be forwarded to the College Council and the Deanship of Graduate Studies for final approval.

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Citation and Documentation (APA Style)

The research plan should adhere to the American Psychological Association (APA) 7th edition guidelines for citation and referencing. This style should be applied consistently throughout the document, ensuring all sources used in the research plan are correctly cited both within the text and in the reference list.

Key guidelines include:

- In-text citations should include the author's last name and the publication year.
- The reference list should be formatted according to the APA 7th edition, with all entries alphabetically arranged and containing full publication details (author, year, title, publisher, etc.).
- For direct quotations, page numbers should be included in the in-text citation.

Appendix 2: Cover Page Contents and Font Specifications

The cover page for the research plan should include the following information, formatted according to the specifications provided:

- **Title of the Research Plan**
  - Bold, centered at the top of the page, in Traditional Arabic (for Arabic) or Times New Roman (for English), size 20 pt.

- **Student's Name**
  - Placed below the title, centered, size 18 pt.

- **Program and Department**
  - Below the student's name, specify Master of Pharmaceutical Sciences/Assessment and Applications of Phytotherapeutic Drugs, Pharmacognosy Department, and College of Pharmacy.

- **University Name and Logo**

      o   **University Name**: Prince Sattam Bin Abdulaziz University

      o   The logo should be placed in the top-right corner of the cover page.

- **Date**

      o   The submission date should be centered at the bottom of the cover page.

Appendix 3: Model for Page Margin Spacing

The margins for the research plan should be set as follows:

- **Top**: 2.5 cm
- **Bottom**: 2.5 cm
- **Left**: 2.5 cm
- **Right**: 3.5 cm

No decorative borders or frames should be applied to the pages of the research plan. The text should be aligned to the margins, ensuring uniformity across all sections.

References and Sources:

At the end of the research plan, a complete list of all references and sources cited in the text must be included. The reference list should follow the APA 7th edition guidelines, ensuring that each entry is correctly formatted and complete.

Stages of Final Approval:

1. **Review by the Pharmacognosy Department**
   After submission, the research plan will undergo a thorough review by the Pharmacognosy Department. Any required modifications will be communicated to the student through the scientific advisor.

2. **College Council Review**
   Once approved by the department, the research plan will be forwarded to the College of Pharmacy Council for further approval.

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3. **Approval by the Deanship of Graduate Studies**
   Upon successful review and approval by the College Council, the research plan will be submitted to the Deanship of Graduate Studies for final approval and assignment of a thesis supervisor.

4. **Thesis Writing**
   Once all approvals are obtained, the student can proceed to the thesis writing phase. The research plan will serve as a blueprint for the research work and will be closely followed during the research and writing process.

Final Notes:

1. **Thesis Submission Language**:
   The thesis, including the research plan, must be written in English in accordance with the rules of the College of Pharmacy. The abstract should be provided in both Arabic and English.

2. **Abstract Formatting**:
   The abstract must be concise, summarizing the main objectives, methodology, and expected outcomes of the research. The English version should come first, followed by the Arabic translation, with both abstracts clearly titled.

3. **Adherence to Regulations**:
   The research plan must comply with the updated regulations for graduate studies. Any deviations from the approved format or requirements may result in delays or rejections during the approval process.