



PROTESTANT INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (PIASS)

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PROTESTANT INSTITUTE OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCES (PIASS)

OFFICE OF THE VICE -CHANCELLOR

A BRIEF GUIDE FOR BA DISSERTATION WRITING UP AND SUPERVISION



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PIASS offers bachelor degrees in different programs. The BA with honors is completed in four years and is sanctioned by exams, field work in different disciplines and an end of studies “Short Dissertation”. It is the supervision of this BA dissertation that concerns the present guidelines.

1. The topic of dissertation

At the end of their third year, students who have successfully completed the taught courses will choose a topic for *short dissertation* to be completed by the end of their studies. A topic of the study should be a researchable topic. A student should be interested in it and especially he/she should have inspirational literature related to it. Words in the title should be chosen with great care, and their association with one another must be carefully considered. While the title should be brief, (20 characters), it should be accurate, descriptive and comprehensive, clearly indicating the subject of the investigation. In order to develop a clear title, a student must also be clear about the focus of his/her research.

The faculty’s supervision committee/Council will receive submission from the staff and students of possible topics and will establish a list of topics of research. A comprehensive list of topics and supervisor assigned to each student will be signed by the dean of the faculty, published and communicated to the academic staff involved in the supervision.

2. Introduction

The student will need to define the area to be examined, state the reasons for his/her interest in and choice of this area, give an overview of the way in which he/she intends to examine and deal with the key issues and indicate the overall structure of the research proposal [major sections or chapters].

3. Background of the study

The proposal needs to show why the intended research is important and justifies the search effort. The proposal must outline the significance (theoretical or practical) or relevance of the topic. All research is part of a larger scholarly enterprise and candidates should be able to argue for the value and positioning of their work.

4. Review of research literature

Sometimes this can be part of the background; it is optional. A short and precise overview about the current state of research that is immediately connected with the research project is very important. The following can be used as a guide;

- Reference the most important contributions of other scholars.



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- Identify the missing aspect that this research wants to investigate.
- Discuss the theoretical scope or the framework of ideas that will be used to back the research.
- Demonstrate that the researcher is fully conversant with the ideas that are to be dealt with and try as much as possible to link them with the study.

5. Rationality of the study

The rational of the study should capture the relevance of the study, which opens up curiosity for the researcher to carry out the study. It should indicate the open problem which then will be the motive for the research project. It should state clearly how the research will contribute to the existing research. This gives a way to clearly present the problem statement.

6. Problem statement

A problem statement is based on the gap, weakness or raised questions on the study. This is identified based on the available research that other scholars have done. In case the study is a case study, then the problem statement of the study should focus on the case study. For example if the topic is **“the contribution of microfinance institutions to the poverty reduction in Rwanda: a case study of RIM in Huye”**,

Then the contribution of RIM to poverty reduction in Huye will be the focus of the study.

7. Research questions and objectives/hypotheses or assumptions

Having a problem statement, a student should have two or three questions that will help him/her to respond to the identified problem. Objectives are usually how the response to the research questions will be done. This section sets the parameters of the research proposal. The questions must be precise and unequivocal. Any assumptions/ hypotheses must be clear, explicit.

8. Research method and methodology

The methods should be described in enough details for the study to be replicated. Methodologies include tools expected to carry out or collect data. Every stage should be explained and justified with clear reasons for the choice of the particular methods and material. Documenting the study through archives and library readings, field work, interviews, seminars and workshops, are some of the tools to conduct the study.

9. Supervision process



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At the end of level four, students who have successfully completed the taught courses choose a topic for the end of studies *short dissertation* [4.1. Code of conduct in supervision]. Once the list of the topics of research is adopted and officially published by the faculty and communicated by the dean to the supervisor, the student makes contact with the supervisor assigned to advise him/her as soon as possible. During these early meetings, the student presents the following to the supervisor for appreciation:

- Formulation of the research topic,
- Research proposal and background of the study
- Literature review and research questionnaire.
- Structure of the Research.
- In addition, the student and the supervisor will elaborate a detailed calendar for the research to be fully completed and submitted in the timeline of the studies fitting in the four years of the BA studies. The timeframe adopted by the student and the supervisor is to be handed to the faculty council by the supervisor.

10. Timeline for Writing the Dissertation

The research, writing and submission of the dissertation are part and important piece of a package of programs offered by PIASS during all years of studies. Unless it is a case of emergency, any request for delaying or suspending the presentation of the dissertation must be made known to the supervisor who in turn reports to the faculty's supervision committee. The proof must be clearly documented [medical prescriptions by a recognized doctor in the case of long illness or other case; any other important incident (supervision guidelines 4.7)]. If in any case, the student is responsible for the delay and is unable to submit his/her dissertation within this deadline; s/he should pay registration fees for the credit of that dissertation. In any case, any extension of the supervision of a BA dissertation cannot go beyond one year. In the case of a delay caused by the supervisor, the student reports to the faculty council; the faculty council shall make the appropriate decision.

11. Plagiarism

Research reports conducted by the student should sound original. References to other resources must be noted appropriately and be fully acknowledged. Plagiarism is the most serious academic "crime"; it consists in using someone else resources, texts, findings, without acknowledging the sources properly.



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Failure to do appropriate documentation indicates a weakness of the student which may result in sanctions for him/her. Any proved and consistent plagiarism will result in the dismissal of the dissertation and failure of the project.

12. Citation and references

PIASS has provisionally adopted the American Psychological Association [APA] style of using references and citations in research, dissertations and publications [as shown below]. The most important thing however when citing and referencing is to **be consistent**. Where reference is done to a particular piece of work within the main body of the text, it has to be made sure it is acknowledged. Work should be formatted and submitted as follows:

Submission- the texts in progress should be typed, one and a half spaces between lines, on A4 paper, font 12; send electronically in words. Section heading should be in CAPITALS AND CENTRED; subsection side headings should be in small letters, italicized. Foreign words, except proper names, should be italicized. Dates should be given as 4 July 2014; the 1990s; 2000 - 14; numerals up to hundred should be spelled out; all other numbers given in figure, e.g. 12-18%; initials of institutions or countries should be given without stops: PIASS; FPR; UN; USA; EAC. Once a text or section of the text is ready for final evaluation, it should be handed to the supervisor in both hard and electronic versions.

Quotations:

Short quotations. If quoting directly from a work, the user needs to include the author, year of publication and the page number for the reference: According to Murambi (1999), "children from poor families often fail to perform well" (p.201).

Long quotations of more than 40 words should be indented, and omit quotation marks. Start the quotation on a new line, indented ½ inch from the left margin; type the quotation on the new margin, and indent the first line of any subsequent paragraph within the quotation. Single quotation marks should be used for any additional quotations included within the main quotation. The page number of the reference must be given at the end of the quotation, for example:

Jones (1998) reported the following:

"The study showed that students often had difficulty using APA style, especially when it was their time citing sources. This difficulty could be attributed to the fact that many students failed to purchase a style manual or to ask their teacher for help". (199)



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Footnotes and references: footnotes and references should be kept to a minimum number. Footnotes and references on a page appear on its bottom. They should be single spaced.

References to publications: should be placed in the text, in parentheses, and a bibliography provided at the end of the article. References within the text should be in the form of: family name, date: page number - (Jyambere & Rudahana, 2014: 324).

Bibliography: The bibliography is a list of the publications used for reference. It appears at the end for the paper. The listing is alphabetical by the family name of the first author. PIASS has adopted the APA (American Psychological Association) style of references in the bibliography.

Edited Books with one author: Karangane, A. (1990). *Gospel and Sword*. Paris: Karthala.

Edited book with two or more authors: Gakire, T. & Rucinoni, L. (eds). (2014). *Histoire des écoles et universités du Rwanda*. Yaoundé: Editions CLE.

More than two authors: List by family names followed by initials; commas separate author names, and the last name is preceded by ampersand: Kananga, S., Munywanyi, E., Nkundibakwe, I., Uwunganira, P. Bizibose, E., Ntwaranyi, E., & Bambari, C. (2014). *A handbook of conflict resolution through traditional cultural mechanisms in Africa*. Huye: PIASS Series. Subsequent citations, only use first author's family name followed by "et al" in the signal phrase: (Karangane et al., 1998) ...

Organisation as author: Protestant Institute of Arts and Social Sciences. (2010). *A Handbook of rules and regulations*. Huye: CEL publishers.

Government Document: Rwanda Education Board. (2013). *Performances and counter performances in low fee schools* (HEC publications no 2/2013, 77-92). Kigali: Imprimerie scolaire.

Unknown author: Insobanuramagambo y'Imigani y'imigenurano n'imigani miremire (5th ed.). (2013). Kigali: Editions de l'Imprimerie Scolaire.

More works by same author: Use the author's name for all entries and list the entries by the year [earlier comes first]; Gihana, B. (2010); Gihana, B. (2014).

More than one reference of a same author or group of authors published in the same year: Reference list alphabetically by the title of the article, then assign a letter suffixes to the year, e.g.: Rutavogerwa, P. (2012a); Rutavogerwa, P. (2012b) then the rest of the reference.

For Articles: Dusenge, J.P. (2011). "La réforme de la douane au Burundi", Huye : PIASS Series (1), 23-59.

For article or chapter published in a book: Kayisire, J. (2014). "L'Eglise de l'autre moitié du monde". In Gatenderi, T & Rutetera, L.(eds), *Histoire du Sahara*, pp.117-143. Yaoundé: Editions CLE.



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Maps, diagrams, figures: should be placed at the end of the dissertation, each on a separate sheet and numbered. They should be clearly drawn and sources must be duly acknowledged.

Abstract: dissertation should have an abstract of no more than 250 words.

Copyright: every source used should be recognised and in the case the article presented was published, authorisation to republish it should have been submitted.

Electronic sources: Online articles follow same guidelines for printed article: Author, A.A., & Author, B.B. (date of publication). Title of article. *Title of Online periodical, volume number* (issue number). Retrieved from: <http://www.goodaddress.com/HEC/rw/>

13. Illustrations and Tables

The illustrations and tables used in the dissertation should be precise and readable. They should be introduced and commented. The sources of illustrations and tables must be identified.

14. Appendices

They should be referred to in the text and appear in chronological order. They may contain material relevant to the work but not essential for inclusion in the main body of the work. They may include interview schedules or questionnaires, budgets, data diagrams, curriculum vitae or key research staff.

15. Submission of the Dissertation

At the satisfaction of the supervisor, a dissertation should be submitted to the faculty council. The faculty council should then identify external readers or examiners of the dissertation. A day for defense or presentation of the *short dissertation* should be set after the approval of the external examiner. As a guide for the external examiner, the following are the basic required information in the dissertation before it is defended:

- Researchable topic clearly formulated
- Background of the study clearly presented
- Problem statement which is relevant to the study
- Research questions and objectives in harmony
- Findings that respond to the research questions and to the objectives
- Conclusions and any relevant forwards or recommendations
- Referencing, footnotes, quotations within the texts duly acknowledged [see section 12 above]
- Bibliography at the end of dissertation to respond to the APA model [see section 12 above]



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Therefore the role of the examiner is to observe whether the above information and other required information for a scientific work are being taken care of. Before the defense, the examiner should send all comments to the faculty council. The faculty council shall submit these comments to the supervisor who will then share them with students for corrections.

16. Defense or presentation of dissertation

The bachelor degree students are allowed to present their dissertation if they have successfully completed taught courses. The student presents to a jury of 3 academic staff a 12000 word dissertation. The jury should be made by the president of the jury, the examiner and the supervisor. However, the supervisor should not have a say in the allocation of marks nor should he/she be in the discussion session of the marks allocation. He/she should be able to give solid remarks in the process of defense, if asked.

18. Conciliation in Supervision

For any matters regarding the supervision processes or issues of concern, the student or the staff supervising may present a substantiated case in writing to the faculty council. The head of the faculty must give an answer in no more than four weeks from the date of the reception of the petition.

Adopted by the Senate of PIASS on 17-May-2022

Prof. Musemakweli Elisée

The Vice - Chancellor, PIASS