

## GENERAL RULES FOR WBS MBA RESEARCH

1. You **MUST** pass the Research Methodology course to have any hope of completing your MBA.
2. Remember - Master's degrees are at a high level; if they were easy, everyone would have one and they wouldn't be worth much.
3. **ONLY** refer to **black** bound research reports for examples; the blue ones are Project reports, which had different criteria and are no longer allowed.
4. **Follow / use the template and / or example for your Research Proposal** (and the final Report – which has a different template) submission. This will give you the shortest path to completion. Otherwise, it will just be given back to you with the instruction to follow the template / example!
5. **REFERENCE** your work, (**every** fact, claim or statement not your own) – both in-text AND in the reference list and make sure they align. Follow the format. It is clearly described in the example, and at the beginning of your course pack. A single reference at the end of each paragraph is not sufficient.
6. Take care to look at the dates of the articles that you cite, and discuss them in the correct order – don't treat them as though they were all published at the same time.
7. **Everything must align**; your problem and sub-problems with your literature review, with your propositions / hypotheses / research questions, with your methodology, with the instrument you use to gather data, with your analysis method, with your results presentation with your discussion, with your conclusion and recommendations.
8. The following steps apply to your proposal for it to align as stated above.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Identify and describe practical problem or issue	Write Research Problem based on practical problem	Do lit review ONE sub-problem at a time	Write an H, P or RQ based on the lit review	Write the research methodology chapter –	Write your questionnaire, interview guide, maths model or other method to collect your data	Complete your consistency matrix
	Key words Key ideas Verbs	Integrate concepts by sub-headings		See later in this document for structure of the chapter	Only ask what you need to	Make sure everything aligns
Chapter 1		Chapter 2		Chapter 3	Appendices in the proposal	

9. Even though you need to follow the process above, don't try and write each section completely before moving on to the next. You will go backwards and forwards a lot (iterative process). Write it as you go along, putting in relevant sections as they occur to you. It is possible to write all your proposal chapters simultaneously. It is an iterative process, and you will be tweaking

your problem and sub-problems, your propositions, etc as you go along and discover new insights.

10. Your title should be not longer than 15 words and must include "in South Africa" or similar. Your topic is not your title, but may be helpful in constructing your title.
11. Your Research Problem statement should be your sub-problems added together – no more and no less. Alternatively, write your Research problem, then just break it up into sections of ONE idea at a time, and each of these will be a sub-problem. Do not introduce any new ideas when you write your sub-problems. Have a verb at or near the beginning of your research problem statement. Verbs like "discuss", "explore" and "examine" are more process oriented verbs, and we generally discourage their use.
12. Some good output / result focused verbs for you Research problem are:

Identify	define	relate	describe	review	justify	indicate
formulate	explain	compare	contrast	suggest	interpret	analyse
assess	construct	apply	demonstrate	illustrate	categorise	deduce
create	resolve	debate	propose	differentiate	construct	argue
derive	design	evaluate	establish	conceptualise	suggest	integrate
compile	develop	challenge	consolidate	clarify	criticise	formulate
ascertain	appraise	calculate	recommend			

13. Make sure that you have ALL the main concepts and key words included in your Problem statement (and sub-problems if applicable), because these will be the basis of your literature searches for your literature review.
14. **Do NOT** do any actual research (send out questionnaires, interview people, etc), until you have been given the go-ahead by the panel.
15. **BACK UP** your work early and often. Keep your back-ups in a different place to your computer and remember that external drives and memory sticks can also crash – use a CD or DVD to back up your work as well.
16. Practice version control. You may need to delete some work (which hurts) so simply save your document as version 2, then delete what you have to. You can always recover your deleted text this way, by copying from an earlier version.
17. Don't just summarise the articles you read – **integrate** the ideas so that you present a concept or idea as your heading, then a discussion about it, including the different views, contradictions, etc. See my example to get an idea. If nearly all your literature review paragraphs start with "So-and So says . . .", you haven't integrated.
18. Be consistent in everything, eg if you are going to use italics for *et al*, ALWAYS use italics.
19. The word "however" ALWAYS has a comma after it.
20. Multiple in-text references must be presented in **date order**, not alphabetical order. The reference list must be in alphabetical order and **not** numbered. Do **not** put the author's initials into in-text references.
21. Use the passive voice when you write, eg "a sample of 40 will be selected" NOT "I / the researcher will select a sample of 40". Don't use personal pronouns, eg I, my, we, our.

22. Do not use in-text emphasis, eg bold, italics, etc except for headings.
23. Table headings go **above** the Table, Figure headings go **below** the Figure and both must always be referenced.
24. Don't overstate, eg "very unique".
25. Always follow an author's name with a date – ie reference correctly - as per the proposal example and the guidelines at the beginning of every course pack course pack.
26. If you don't want to use Endnote, create your reference list by making a single-column Table at the end of your document and hide the borders. As soon as you put a reference into your document, type it out in full into one of the rows in your table. Put the next one into the next row. Every now and then, put your cursor into the Table, click on Table, then Sort and press ok – it will put your references into alphabetical order and make sure that all in-text refs are in the list and *vice-versa*.
27. Preferably use EndNote – it will make your references error-free and save you weeks of editing.
28. Do not expect your supervisor to be a proof-reader.
29. For literature reviews, search backwards (ie for earlier references) using the reference list of good articles and search forwards (for more recent articles) using the "cited-in" link in Google Scholar and the Library search engines that have it. Also click on the authors and key words that the search engine suggests and see if there is good material there.
30. Make sure that **most** of your references are journal articles, preferably peer-reviewed.
31. Use the Advanced search options in Google Scholar and the library engines for better results.
32. Print out your good articles and keep them sorted by topic area. This keeps the piles small and each pile will be the basis of a heading or sub-heading, and is much easier to handle and write up (smaller chunks). It also helps prevent "inadvertent plagiarism". DO NOT SET YOURSELF UP FOR PLAGIARISM.
33. When discussing validity and reliability, discuss the principle and then how YOUR research meets the requirements. Point out where it doesn't and how you are trying to minimise it.
34. Apply the following **structure to your methodology chapter**:

Describe why the paradigm and method you have selected is appropriate for the research that you are doing, and describe the paradigm and method in the context of your own research, as per the headings or sections listed below.

For each section, describe both the theory AND how your research meets the requirements of the theory. If there are areas that your research does not meet the requirements, explain why, and how you are going to minimise any negative effects.

### **REFERENCE YOUR WORK (in-text AND in the Reference list)**

Heading / sub-heading	Example / process
Paradigm	Qualitative, Quantitative or Mixed – what each paradigm means and why it is appropriate for <b>your</b> study.
Methodological approach	Eg Focus Group, Questionnaire, In-depth interviews, mathematical modelling, Repertory Grid, etc, and why it is appropriate for <b>your</b> study. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Population description</li> <li>• Sample</li> <li>• Sampling method</li> </ul>
Procedure for data collection	Describe the process you will follow
The instrument to be used	Your own instrument, eg questionnaire, interview guide
Analysis method	Eg content analysis, regression analysis, etc – describe the theory of the method and how you will apply it in terms of what you are trying to discover through your research.
Validity and Reliability	Describe the principle, then explain how <b>your</b> research relates to the principle or theory, and how your research meets or attempts to meet the stated requirements. Reference the theory!

35. Base your research around the Consistency Matrix:

<b>Problem statement: (write out in full)</b>				
<b>Sub-problems</b>	<b>Literature review articles (refs)</b>	<b>Hypotheses, Propositions, OR Research Questions</b>	<b>Data to be collected</b>	<b>Data analysis method</b>
Sub-problem 1 (write in full)	Write the relevant authors and date of articles used	Write the H, P or RQ that is based on the literature for Sub-problem 1 only	Write down the questions you must ask to find out if your H, P or RQ is "correct" or not. (This is your actual research).	Describe briefly how you will analyse the data that you have collected
Sub-problem 2 (write in full)				

36. Use South African English (uses "s" eg "organise" not "z").

37. Give actual facts and figures (and reference them), don't use words like "many", "large", "few" – these are vague, non specific and do not give any actual information.