

**FACULTY OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY
NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF NIGERIA**

**GUIDELINES FOR THE DISSERTATION COMPONENT OF THE
PART II FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATIONS**

VOLUME 1

APPROVED BY THE

**FACULTY BOARD OF OBSTETRICS AND GYNAECOLOGY
NATIONAL POSTGRADUATE MEDICAL COLLEGE OF NIGERIA**

NOVEMBER 2015

1.0: AIM/OBJECTIVES OF THE DISSERTATION

The aim of the dissertation is for the candidate to carry out, and write up, an original research project relevant to the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. It provides an opportunity for the candidate to demonstrate that he/she has acquired adequate knowledge and skills in the conduct of clinical research and other areas of the obstetrics and gynaecology. The candidate is required to conduct research on a topic of his choice in a subspecialty area of interest following blinded formative assessment by at least two senior academics in the faculty and formal approval by the college. It is important that the study holds the promise of contributing new knowledge or improving on the understanding or application of what is already known in the practice of obstetrics and gynaecology. At the end of the dissertation, the candidate will have demonstrated ability, within a clinical setting to:

- Identify a gap in research and write up a research proposal;
- Carry out a comprehensive literature search and critically review/appraise the literature on the topic of interest;
- Plan and conduct a small-scale research project relevant to obstetrics and gynaecology spanning a maximum duration of 9 months ;
- Produce a well written research report that accurately captures the research process and conveys the findings and their clinical and public health implications.

2.0 CRITERIA FOR ACCEPTANCE OF DISSERTATION PROPOSAL TOPICS FOR THE AWARD OF THE PART II FMCOG FELLOWSHIP

To qualify for acceptance, Dissertation research proposals must

- a. Be on topics that are relevant to the contemporary practice of obstetrics and gynaecology in Nigeria and internationally.

- b. A clear gap in knowledge must be established via a comprehensive review of the recent relevant scientific literature especially studies in the preceding ten years.
- c. The study must involve a prospective cross-sectional or longitudinal quantitative study design. Studies involving retrospective designs, qualitative research methods or mixed quantitative-qualitative designs are not acceptable.
- d. The objectives of the study MUST involve at least one analytical or comparative component which would usually involve statistical tests of hypothesis or other statistical methods of comparison. Studies involving only descriptive designs such as studies of prevalence or incidence are not considered appropriate for a dissertation at this level. Operational research (KAP) and questionnaire based studies will not be accepted.
- e. Where the study design involves measurement of laboratory, radiologic or other non-clinical indices, they must be related to relevant clinical outcomes in obstetrics and gynaecology to be acceptable.

3.0 THE STRUCTURE OF THE FMCOG PART II DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

TITLE PAGE

This should contain the title of the work and a statement thus:-

“A dissertation proposal submitted to the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria in part fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the Fellowship of the College”

The name of the candidate, degree(s), awarding institution, and year of award should follow.

The title should reflect the proposed research study by incorporating, as a minimum, aspects of the study setting, study population and the research question.

DECLARATION PAGE

This should contain the following declaration:

“It is hereby declared that this work will be original unless otherwise acknowledged. The work will not be submitted in support of an application for a fellowship/degree/diploma of this or any other institution of learning. It will also not be submitted for publication/conference presentation

until the finished work has been assessed for the award of the fellowship of the National Postgraduate Medical College of Nigeria”. This declaration must be signed by the candidate.

CERTIFICATION PAGE

The supervisor(s) must sign the following statement:-

“The study proposed in this dissertation proposal will be performed by the candidate under my/our supervision. I/We will also supervise the writing of the dissertation”.

Name of Supervisor.....

Status of Supervisor.....

Signature..... Date.....

TABLE OF CONTENTS PAGE

This should list the Chapter headings and corresponding page numbers.

SUMMARY

This should be 150-300 words. This section should be structured into: ***Background*** of the research problem, ***Aim(s)***, ***Objectives***, ***Research Methods***, ***Planned handling of results*** and ***Strengths and limitations*** of the study. It is important that the information provided is specific and clear.

INTRODUCTION (BACKGROUND AND CLINICAL/PUBLIC HEALTH CONTEXT)

This should introduce and define the important themes/concepts/processes /approaches/methods that are fundamental to the understanding of the research project with appropriate references.

The **Introduction** should document the clinical and public health significance of the proposed research topic and explain the context for the study. What is to be studied should be clearly stated by describing at least two variables and the presumed relationship/association between them. At the end of this section, it should be clear to the reader what the identified research problem is and why it is necessary to study it.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature search should be focused on studies whose aims and objectives are similar to those of the proposed study. The objectives of the literature review should be stated and should draw directly from the objectives of the study. The objectives should be to review the recent relevant literature on previous studies that had the same objectives as the proposed study or that utilized

the same methodology. The essence is to highlight what is known and clearly identify what is not known or needs to be explored, as a justification for the study. Only original research studies published in peer reviewed local and international journals, presented in conferences or published as technical reports, theses or other forms of research publications should be included in the literature review.

Literature Review Search Strategies: It is important that the literature search is shown to be systematic and comprehensive. The search strategy should be stated in clear terms. The range of sources searched should be documented. Which data bases were searched, what search words or phrases were utilized? How many scientific articles were identified? How were they screened? What were the inclusion/exclusion criteria for selection of articles for the literature review?

Summary and critical appraisal/analysis of sources

Mere citing and summary of sources is not adequate. The candidate is required to demonstrate the skills of critical appraisal of identified articles/material included in the literature review. It is helpful to structure the components of the literature review according to the objectives of the study for clarity. Within each subsection, review of articles included may be done, preferably, by grouping articles by themes such as topics, objectives or study outcome measures or by appraising each article sequentially. Expected components of critical analysis include a clear documentation of what is known, what is not known, areas of inconsistencies or controversies, strengths and limitations of the reviewed studies and how these relate to the proposed study.

AIM AND OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTION

The research question should be clearly stated reflecting the methodology of the proposed study. The aim(s) of the study should be stated starting with “To...” It is important that appropriate, carefully chosen, strong verbs be used in the aim and objectives. *Objectives* should start with “To...” It is required that the list of objectives should not exceed 5.

Due to the importance of the literature review to the whole research process, the first objective should be based on the literature review. This should read: “To review the recent available literature on.....” The final objective should be based on the outcomes e.g “Based on the

findings of objectives 2 and 3 above, to make recommendations on the management of ...” etc.).The other two or three should capture the core intent and methods of the study. For example a study may seek to compare the accuracy of specific methods of clinical and ultrasound assessment of fetal weight in the pregnant women presenting in early labour at term. The specific objectives may then include:

1. To review the recent available literature on the accuracy of fetal weight estimation using clinical and ultrasound methods and comparisons of the two methods.
2. To determine the mean percentage accuracy and percentage estimated within 15% accuracy, of clinical estimation of fetal weight by comparing the weight determined, using X method, in early labour to the birth weight at term.
3. To determine the mean percentage accuracy, and percentage estimated within 15% accuracy, of ultrasound estimation of fetal weight, by comparing the weight determined using Y method, in early labour, to the birth weight at term.
4. To compare the proportions of fetal weight estimated within 15% accuracy by clinical weight estimation using X method and ultrasound weight estimation using Y method.
5. Based on the finding of objectives 2, 3 and 4 above, to make recommendations on the best method for estimation of fetal weight in pregnant women presenting in early labour at term.

The aims, objectives, research questions and hypotheses should be derived from the literature review and be closely related to each other.

RESEARCH METHODS

The chosen research methods must be appropriate to the study aim/objectives/ research question. This section should be structured into the following subsections:

Design: The study design should be clearly stated and justified from the available scientific literature. Where the research question(s) could have been answered using different study

designs, the choice of any specific one should be explained and justified.

Setting: Adequate details of the clinical setting in which the study will be carried out should be provided.

Sampling Approach; Sample Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria; Sample Size determination;

Sample Recruitment: This section should provide the specific details of how the sample for the study will be selected. This should include clear inclusion/exclusion criteria. Sample size determination must use formulae appropriate for the stated study design and the principles and steps in the recruitment of the sample. For example, it is inappropriate to use sample size formulae meant for prevalence studies in calculating the minimum sample size required for a prospective cohort study. The demographic variables of the study sample should be presented here.

Data Collection Methods: The specific methods of data collection should be described in detail and justified with appropriate scientific references.

Ethical Considerations: It is required that all proposed studies involving human subjects be approved by the appropriate Hospital Research Ethics Committee (HREC). Copies of the ethical approval letters must be obtained and submitted for a proposal to be sent out for Formative assessment and should be included in the appendices of the finished project. This section should explain how subject confidentiality, anonymity, and informed consent will be implemented.

Analytical Approach: This section should provide details of how data will be analyzed including the specific types of data to be collected and the statistical tests to be used. There should be a detailed discussion of the specific statistical tests of hypothesis/significance that will be applied and how the results will be interpreted. This discussion should be based on appropriate scientific literature and where probable alternative tests exist, the choice of specific options should be justified.

PLANNED HANDLING OF RESULTS

The proposed figures and tables for display of results should be documented.

STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The anticipated strengths and limitations of the study based on the chosen study design, research methods, and data analytical methods and any other should be discussed with appropriate references. How the limitations will likely impact on the results and their interpretation / generalization should be highlighted.

Word Count: The completed dissertation should be 10,000 words +/-10%, not inclusive of the abstract, references, appendices, figures, tables, and other illustrations.

The following guidelines are suggested for the word count of the different sections of the Dissertation Proposal. The word count should be stated at the end of the **Summary**.

- Introduction: (800-1000 words)
- Review of the literature review (1500- 2000 words)
- Aim, RQ, objectives (300-500 words)
- Research Methods (1500 -2000 words)
- Planned handling of Results (200-300 words)
- Strengths and limitations of the study (300-500 words)

References

The Vancouver referencing style should be used throughout.