

FREE COMPANION RESOURCE

Chapter 1 Structure & Content Checklist

A section-by-section checklist for the Introduction chapter of your PhD or Masters thesis proposal.
Companion to: "How to Write Chapter 1 of a PhD Thesis Proposal" on resourcefulscholarshub.com

How to use this: Go through each section after drafting your Chapter 1. Tick off every item you've addressed. Anything left unchecked is a gap to fix before you submit to your supervisor.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE CHAPTER

- ☐ Section is roughly one paragraph long
- ☐ Clearly states what the chapter covers
- ☐ Does not repeat detailed content from later sections

2. BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

- ☐ Moves from a general to a specific perspective (the "funnel")
- ☐ Includes historical/contextual explanation of the issue
- ☐ Uses data and statistics to show the scale of the problem
- ☐ Draws on grey literature (government, NGO, institutional reports)
- ☐ Is understandable to a reader unfamiliar with your topic
- ☐ Concepts are connected logically, not listed as disjointed facts

3. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

- ☐ States the problem directly and early ("The problem under investigation is...")
- ☐ Explains why it is a problem, with evidence
- ☐ Problem is complex enough to warrant doctoral-level study
- ☐ Problem clearly points toward a new contribution to knowledge
- ☐ Does NOT lead with "there is a gap in the literature..."
- ☐ Is consistent with the objectives and methodology used later

4. JUSTIFICATION OF THE STUDY

- ☐ Answers "why does this problem deserve investigation?"
- ☐ States the purpose of the study clearly
- ☐ Follows logically from the problem statement

5. SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

- ☐ Covers academic significance (contribution to knowledge/theory/methodology)
- ☐ Covers practical significance (benefits to real stakeholders)
- ☐ Presented general-to-specific (inverted pyramid)
- ☐ Each beneficiary/stakeholder group discussed separately

6. OBJECTIVES / RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- ☐ One general objective reflecting the study topic
- ☐ 4-5 specific objectives derived from the general objective
- ☐ Objectives emanate directly from the problem statement
- ☐ Action verbs match your methodology (quant/qual/mixed)
- ☐ A variety of action verbs used (not repeating the same one)
- ☐ Each objective is distinct enough to sustain its own discussion/paper

7. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- ☐ Boundaries (population, time, geography, variables) clearly stated
- ☐ Scope is neither too wide nor too narrow for a doctoral study
- ☐ Scope choice is explicitly justified

8. LIMITATIONS & DELIMITATIONS

- ☐ Limitations (outside your control) are clearly identified
- ☐ Each limitation has a stated mitigation strategy
- ☐ Delimitations (your choices) are clearly identified
- ☐ Each delimitation is justified, not just stated
- ☐ Limitations and delimitations are not confused with one another

9. DEFINITION OF TERMS

- ☐ All key/technical terms used in the study are defined
- ☐ Definitions are denotative (contextual to your study), not generic dictionary definitions

10. CHAPTER SUMMARY

- ☐ Roughly one paragraph long
- ☐ Briefly restates what the chapter covered

FORMATTING & PRESENTATION

- ☐ Consistent heading styles throughout the chapter
- ☐ Citations formatted in your required style (APA/Harvard/Chicago)
- ☐ No unexplained jargon or undefined acronyms
- ☐ Proofread for grammar, tense consistency, and flow

Want the fully annotated version of this checklist — plus the Writing Guide, editable Word template, Objectives Worksheet, and Defense Prep Sheet?
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