UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

Arshad Ayub Graduate Business School

MASTER IN BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

APPLIED BUSINESS PROJECT (ABP) GUIDELINES

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

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ARSHAD AYUB GRADUATE BUSINESS SCHOOL
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

APPLIED BUSINESS PROJECT (ABP) GUIDELINES

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SECTION ONE:
INTRODUCTION AND ADMINISTRATION

1.1 OVERVIEW

Central to all managerial activities is the ability to make informed business decisions. Hence, managers must consistently study and analyze issues to ensure that all decisions are well-grounded with facts and strong rationale. In cultivating these habits, managers are required to be aware of and be involved in some forms of research activities as and when they make decisions at the workplace.

Further, managers often interact with research consultants whom the organization engages. It is, therefore, necessary for managers to discriminate between good and flawed studies undertaken by these consultants. Whenever the need arises, managers must undertake or participate in research to solve problems. In addition, managers are also required to evaluate the findings and value of studies published in professional journals and to be able to adapt to the changing work environment.

For these and many other reasons, Applied Business Project (ABP) is a compulsory activity and a required experience for students prior to the award of the MBA by the Arshad Ayub Graduate Business School, UiTM.

1.2 BUSINESS RESEARCH

Business research is often described as a "systematic and organized effort to investigate a specific problem (or a few related problems) encountered in a work environment or a given task or a given setting, that need solutions". It is worth mentioning that Applied Business Project (ABP) is NOT to generate a body of knowledge by trying to comprehend how specific problems that occur in the **ORGANIZATION** can be solved.

Such exercise is undertaken in basic research. However, **ABP** is about **APPLYING** the results of findings to solve specific problems in the **ORGANIZATION**.

Business research is primarily conducted to resolve issues in or interrelated among functional areas. These issues could be treated from the macro or micro perspectives to enhance efficiency and effectiveness in managing and creating shareholders' value. Thus, ABP is designed to be a capstone achievement whereby potential MBA graduates must undertake activities that exhibit the mastery of the knowledge acquired throughout the time spent in pursuing an MBA. Integrated knowledge is, of course, what is best expected, but thorough knowledge in specific areas of study, either applied to a given task or environment, is much encouraged.

1.3 CREDIT UNIT

ABP I (ABP791) carries 2 credit units, and ABP II (ABP792) carries 4 credit units. Both ABP I and II have no classroom contact hours.

1.4 GROUP EFFORT

It is to be undertaken by a group of not more than 3 and not less than 2 students. This is to enable students to realize that:

i. No one has a mastery of all the knowledge within an MBA curriculum. Hence combined effort or teamwork would enable cross-learning among participants.

ii. No one works alone in a work environment. Each member of an organization should be able to work together within a diverse workforce to achieve specific goals that lead to fulfilling the vision and mission of an organization.

Students are expected to work independently undertaking a literature review, developing the academic construct and research methodology, developing research instruments, learning the appropriate measurement methods, including the necessary statistical knowledge, and using statistical packages such as SPSS.

Every member must fulfill their individual responsibility and be accountable for achieving the group performance. Therefore, the spirit of one-for-all and all-for-one should be the motto adapted.

The students must have a face-to-face (F2F) or online meeting/discussion with the advisor minimum of six (6) times per semester. Both parties should keep the evidence of the meeting/discussion.

1.5 RESEARCH ETHICS APPLICATION

Students must apply and obtain the research ethics approval before commencing their fieldwork. The research ethics forms and procedures are available on the AAGBS website. (https://aagbs.uitm.edu.my/index.php/research/research-ethics).

1.6 PHASES AND APPOINTMENT OF ADVISOR

ABP is divided into two major phases (Chart 1.1).

Phase 1 being the proposal stage which must be completed one semester prior to the graduating semester. The School reserves the right to reject any proposal deemed unacceptable. At this stage, early indication of students' capabilities to complete the project within the specific deadline will be determined. The student group may at this point suggest/request/or name an advisor of their choice, but the official appointment is subject to the expert judgment of the School.

Phase 2 of ABP consists of the actual data collection, analysis, and completion of the final report. The final report must be completed and submitted to the Academic Unit three weeks before the date of presentation (Viva). The advisor must first approve the final report. Should the report not meet the requirement, the advisor has the right to recommend that the students be given a 'TL' status (incomplete) and adjourn the presentation until next semester.

Students who fail or obtain a 'TL' status for ABP791 (Proposal) or ABP792 (Final Report) are required to re-take and re-pay the fee for the course (s) in the coming semester.

1.7 ROLES OF ADVISOR

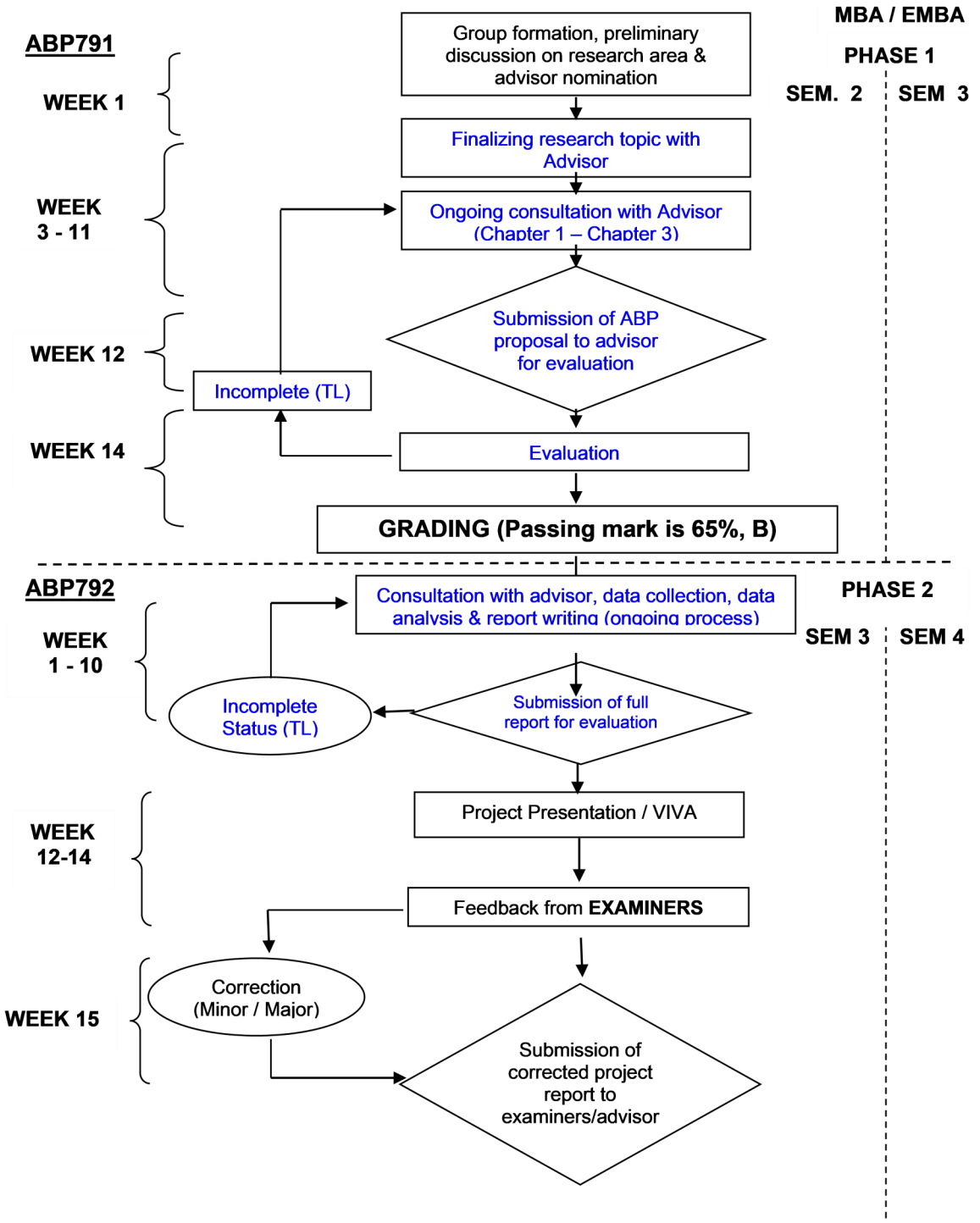
Advisors can add value to the ABP process and contents when they uphold their responsibilities through the following activities.

Table 1.1 Roles of Research Advisor

- Act as an independent sounding board.
- Encourage provocative and proactive questions to stimulate explorative and inquisitive learn-
- Guide in the collation and interpretation of data.
- Operate as a catalyst in decision-making and further action.
- Assist in the set up of strategic agenda.
- Provide a platform for the process of thinking and facilitating it.
- Facilitate students to think 'out-of-the-box'.
- Help identify blind-spots.

- Impart energy and enthusiasm in the project and provide continuous encouragement.
- Communicate constructive criticism on the output.
- Bestow a symbolic presence to help students think and behave, exhibit concern, and impart expert (MBA's curriculum) knowledge.

Chart 1.1 APPLIED BUSINESS PROJECT FLOW CHART



1.8 ROLES OF EXAMINER

The examiner's role is first to ensure that the scientific process of applied research is adhered to with the focus on academic construct and methodology such that the results of the analysis are consistent with the objectives of the applied research. Secondly, in line with the primary purpose of ABP, the candidates' ability to translate the research findings to solve a specific business problem needs to be critically assessed.

1.9 VIVA/PRESENTATION

The (students) group will be required to present their research and findings of the ABP at a scheduled time. Such dates are fixed and are not subject to change unless decided otherwise by the School.

1.10 ABP EVALUATION

For ABP791 (Proposal), the evaluation is done by the advisor (100%). Table 1.2 highlights the assessment components of ABP791.

Table 1.2: ABP791 Evaluation

Components / Assessor	Advisor	TOTAL
Introduction (20%)	100%	100%
Literature Review (40%)		
Methodology (20%)		
Proposal (20%)		

For ABP792 (Final Report), the advisor's evaluation carries 40% of the final grade for the group. It comprises data collection (10%), final report (60%), and presentation (Viva) (30%). The other 60% of the final grade consists of the evaluation by the two appointed examiners. The allocation of the total mark for each examiner is 30%. Table 1.3 summarizes the evaluation weightage by the advisor, first examiner, and second examiner.

The assessments of ABP791 and ABP792 are done using the rubrics as per MyEVA templates. Generally, for both ABP971 and ABP792 evaluations, every group member should obtain a similar grade or equal mark. However, the advisor can give different grades or marks to the students depending on their contribution to the entire project.

Table 1.3: ABP792 Evaluation

Components / Assessors	Advisor	Examiner 1	Examiner 2	TOTAL
Data Collection (10%)	40%	30%	30%	100%
Final Report (60%)				
Viva Voce (30%)				

For **Dual Degree Program**, the panel of examiners for ABP792 consists of the advisor and one (1) examiner. Table 1.4 summarizes the evaluation weightage by the advisor and the examiner.

Table 1.4: ABP792 Evaluation – Dual Degree Program

Components / Assessors	Advisor	Examiner 1	TOTAL
Data Collection (10%)	55%	45%	100%
Final Report (60%)			
Viva Voce (30%)			

1.11 GRADUATION REQUIREMENT

In order to obtain the MBA degree, students must get at least a 'B' grade for all courses, including ABP791 and ABP792. The passing mark for each course is 65% and above.

SECTION TWO: PROPOSAL GUIDELINES

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Most institutes of higher learning have some required format for proposals to be submitted by research students, which are generally similar in context. The researcher has to draw up a plan to investigate and solve specific problems. Each proposal must explain the structure of the task, how it is conceptualized, and the methods to carry out the plan.

The Applied Business Project (ABP791 and ABP792) course requires the students to submit two main documents – the research proposal and the final report. The project proposal (ABP791) is a prerequisite to the final report (ABP792).

A good proposal is straightforward. It sells what the researcher is proposing and why she/he is proposing it. In other words, it must be compelling (that is, interesting), manageable (able to be carried out), and significant to the stakeholders. Therefore, the following sub-sections aim to facilitate and guide the MBA students in writing up a good research proposal. For this purpose, the guideline is arranged into four major sections – getting started, research process, ABP proposal format, and research expectations.

2.2 GETTING STARTED

In essence, ABP791 will equip students with the basic skills of undertaking research and how research is used to support management decision-making. It is also a capstone course that requires students to apply at least one business decision-making tool to synthesize the research outcomes and to offer actionable managerial decisions. Therefore, it is always advisable that candidates begin the ABP by getting acquainted **WITH A BUSINESS ORGANIZATION**. For part-time students, the student's workplace is an excellent place to start.

For most students, getting started is synonymous with numerous head scratching sessions leading to the project title. In most cases, at least two or three topics are generated for discussion among group members.

Ideas must come from a reliable source, usually from a respected person in the industry, from observation over a certain period, or from desk research. Table 2.1 provides a 'What, Why, and How' Framework to get you started.

Table 2.1 'What, Why, and How' Framework for Crafting Research

What? What puzzles/intrigues me (my company)! What do I (my company) want to know more about/understand better? What are my key research questions?	**Why?** Why is this of interest to others (member of my group, my work environment, practitioners or policy makers?) Can the research be justified as a 'contribution to problem solving process or solutions to my current problems?
How – conceptually? What models/tools can I draw on/ develop to answer my research questions? How can these be brought together into a basic business models/ tools to guide my investigation? (Academic Construct/Conceptual/ Theoretical Framework)	**How – practically?** What investigative styles and techniques shall I use to apply my conceptual framework (both to gather material and analyze it)? How shall I gain and maintain access to information sources? (Methodology)

(Source: Watson, 1994)

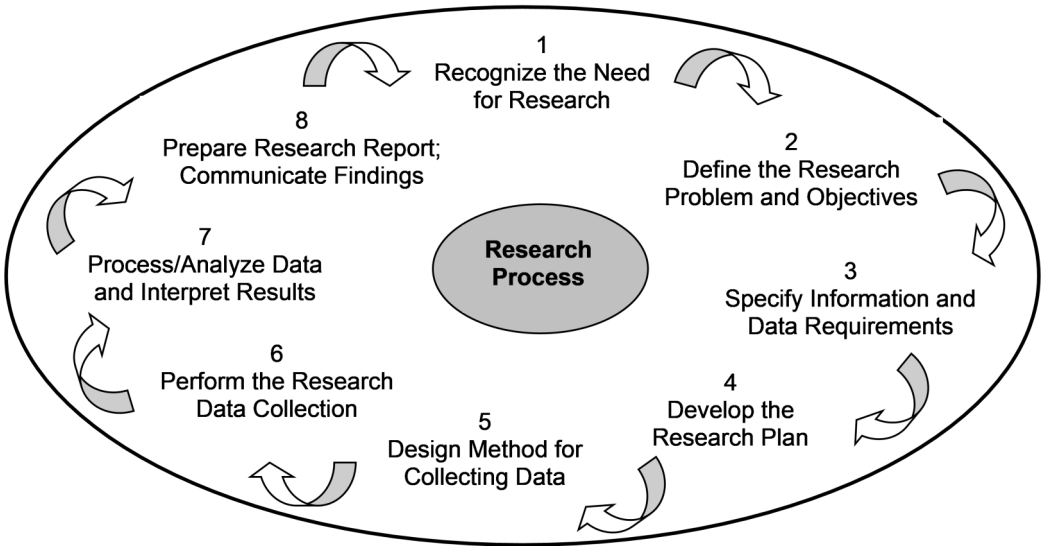
2.3 THE RESEARCH PROCESS

Writing a research proposal should begin with an inquiry into the need for a particular research topic leading to a research/project title (Chart 2.1 – The Research Process). This inquiry provides a starting point for identifying the key issues leading to research problem definition, setting research objectives, specifying the information and data requirements, developing a research plan, and designing the data collection method.

Below is a checklist for a proposal:

1. It defines a question, problem, or issue [or a set of these] addressed by the project.
2. It is the "engine" that drives the inquiry into the topic.
3. It identifies the audience the project will address.
4. It explains why the inquiry is significant for a particular audience.
5. It proposes a method or approach to start the inquiry.
6. It suggests relevant sources of information about the inquiry you are aware of or plan to look for.

Chart 2.1: The Scientific Research Process



Step 1: Recognize the Need for Research

The process of observation or sensing of a problem or problems around you is what gets most of the research, especially applied research, started. The next step is to determine whether there is a real problem and how serious. At this point, a few sessions of brainstorming with your group members would be helpful. Similarly, business magazine and trade news clippings on current business issues would be able to support your argument. Appendix 1 provides a list of some possible research areas.

Step 2: Define the Research Problem and Objectives

The problem identification stage calls for further preliminary data gathering. Talking to industry experts, in-depth reading of specific magazines, trade news, and popular periodicals, or undertaking a simple survey are examples of this activity. Integration of the information obtained through these informal and formal search exercises should help a researcher determine and argue that a problem or problems exist.

Understanding of the business tools/models learned throughout the MBA program would facilitate the problem definition process.

Note that the existence of a problem does not necessarily mean that something is seriously wrong with a current situation that needs to be rectified immediately. A "problem" could indicate an interest in an issue where finding the correct answers might help to improve an existing situation. Be careful to ensure that symptoms are not defined as a real problem.

A problem statement is commonly defined as a clear, precise, and succinct statement of the question or issue that is to be investigated with the goal of finding an answer or solution. Based on the problem definition, research objectives are then proposed. The examples of the research objectives are highlighted in Appendix 2.

Step 3: Specify Information and Data Requirements/Literature Review

Once the problem has been identified and the objectives have been established, the next step is to specify the data and information required. The UiTM Library subscribes and offers various secondary data sources for your convenience. Seek help from the library staff if you are unfamiliar with data search. The examples of secondary data sources are book, journal, business magazine, newspaper, industry report and company annual report.

The students are expected to carry out and write a comprehensive review of literature from secondary data sources in the chosen research area. A substantial literature survey and review are essential as they provide the foundation for the research's academic construct, conceptual framework, or business model.

Step 4: Develop the Research Plan

A big part of the research plan is building a conceptual framework/academic construct for the impending research work. In essence, this framework/construct is the end product of the literature review, as noted in step 3 above (see Appendix 2). Below are important notes on conceptual framework/academic construct:

The conceptual framework is the foundation on which the entire research project is based. "It is logically developed, described, and elaborated network of associations among the variables deemed relevant to the problem situation and identified through preliminary investigations, observations, and literature survey" (Sekaran, 2003). The basis of a conceptual framework or academic construct is the basic acceptable foundations found in any specific areas of study or concepts that are common and specific (in some cases) to the core area of study, be it marketing, accounting, human resource management, and other related business areas. Literature survey provides a solid foundation for developing a conceptual framework or academic construct. Among the essential elements of the conceptual framework are: Variables considered relevant to the study should be identified and labeled in the discussion.

The discussion should state how the variables are related and relationships established. The resultant relationship must be shown as the expected outcomes. A clear explanation of why the relationship exists must be established based on established concepts, models, dimensions, and elements drawn from Literature Review. A schematic diagram of the conceptual framework MUST be provided and demonstrated such that any reader could easily comprehend the conceptualized relationship. The examples of business models/tools are provided in Appendix 3.

Step 5: Research Methodology

i) Business Studies (Non-Finance and Economics)

Having identified the variables in a problem situation and developed the conceptual framework, the next step is to design the research in a way that the requisite data can be gathered and analyzed to arrive at a solution. It is therefore the description of the research journey.

For the ABP791 course, the methodological areas that need to be addressed in the proposal are:

1. Type of Research Design
2. Unit of Analysis
3. Population, Sampling frame, Sample Size
4. Sampling Method
5. Data Collection Method
6. Data Analysis Plan

1. Type of Research Design – In general there are two types of research design Exploratory and Conclusive. For the purpose of ABP and due to the consultative nature of this course, a conclusive research design is preferred. Further, it is expected that Applied Business Project will stay clear of experimental and quasi-experimental types of study. Hence, by type, most ABP research works are confined to DESCRIPTIVE STUDY and CASE STUDY while only occasionally a CORRELATIONAL STUDY may be attempted. A FIELD STUDY focusing on the relationship between variables (e.g. interest rates and deposit pattern) which is often done in a non-contrived setting, with no interference, is acceptable. However, LAB EXPERIMENTATION designs are discouraged completely.

2. Unit of Analysis – refers to the source from where information is going to be extracted. Individuals, groups, dyads, divisions, companies, industry, or countries are examples. In all circumstances the unit of analysis must be clearly identified. In addition, the time horizon of the study –cross sectional or longitudinal should also be specified.

3. Population, Sampling Frame and Sample Size – A research work needs to specify the list/source from which a researcher will obtain the total number of the population. This is called a sampling frame. To illustrate, if the unit of analysis is employees of COMPANY Z, the sampling frame could be the payroll list. Similarly, if the units of analysis are banks in Malaysia, the Association of Bankers or Bank Negara could be the sampling frames. As to the sample size, specifying the exact number is tricky, as again it depends very much on the research design. As far as consumer study is concerned a sample of 200 respondents should be acceptable.

4. Sampling Method - Essentially there are two broad types of sampling – probability sampling and non-probability sampling. Within each type, there are various specific methods. Below are illustrations of the sampling methods (not exhaustive) which you could choose from.

Simple Random Sampling
Systematic Sampling
Stratified Sampling
Cluster Sampling
Convenience Sampling
Quota Sampling

} students are expected to acquire knowledge on their own or with the advice of the appropriate advisors

Do note that the literature review should guide you in choosing the most appropriate research design to address the problem statement and research objectives. In any case, it must be well defined and appropriately applied.

5. Data Collection Method - is an integral part of research design. Problems researched with the use of appropriate methods greatly enhance the value of the research. Among them are:

Interviews : face to face; telephone, electronic; structured or unstructured.

Questionnaires : personally administered; mail, electronically administered.

Observation : of individual events.

It must be noted that students who are planning to use a questionnaire as the research instrument, must be very familiar with the various fundamentals of questionnaire design and the scales of measurement. These include the principles of wording, social desirability, length, and sequencing.

Appropriate measurement scales must be observed. The NOMINAL, ORDINAL, INTERVAL, and /or RATIO scales must be appropriate and applicable to the types of data to be collected for analysis. Rigorous method is essential.

6. Data analysis plan - The proposed data analysis techniques should be highlighted in the proposal. The proposal should also indicate the software package to be used for data analysis e.g. SPSS. In the applied business research context, the use of basic data analysis technique is considered suffice should it is relevant and fulfilling the research objectives. Students are not required to employ any advance statistic technique. Should it be used, it must align with the research objectives.

The next sub-section highlights the research methodology for finance and economics Studies. There are some differences between research methodology for Finance and Economics Studies with other fields of studies. For instance, the hypothesis is required in most finance and economics studies, however it is not compulsory for other field of business studies. In the case where hypotheses are developed and used, the hypotheses statements must be tested and reported accordingly.

ii) Finance and Economics Studies

Having identified the variables in a problem situation and developed the conceptual framework, the next step is to design the research in a way that the requisite data can be gathered and analyzed to arrive at a solution. Testable hypotheses which are developed from the conceptual framework will be tested and that determines the relationship between the variables in study.

After the sections on literature review and conceptual framework have been securely identified and noted, the next step in the research process is to identify the respective variables as well as measure them. Secondary data sources, which are interpretations of primary data, can be found in company records, government publications industry analysis and other centralized and reliable sources including those from the Internet.

It is important to note that most databases provide bibliographic citations or records from books or journals that enable researchers a faster way of gaining access to literature. There are also certain databases that provide historical time series data that enable researchers investigate and test hypotheses. Some relevant examples are provided in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Source of Database

Information	Source
Stock Market Indices and Individual Company Stock Prices and Financial Data	Thomson Datastream Advance (UiTM PTAR)
Malaysian Economic Data including Balance of Payment, Trade and other Economic Fundamentals	http://www.bnm.gov.my
Economic Data on Population, and other Malaysian Fundamentals	http://www.statistics.gov.my
World Bank, World Development Indicators, Database	http://www.worldbank.org
Bank for International Settlements, Annual Reports and Press Release.	http://www.bis.org
International Monetary Fund, Surveys and World Economic Outlook.	http://www.imf.org
CIA Factbook	https://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/index.html
US Census Bureau	http://www.census.gov/ipc/www/idbnew.html

Research design involves a series of rational decision-making steps to design the research so that requisite data can be gathered and analyzed to arrive at a solution. This section also provides the major skeletal framework for the research. The methodological areas that need to be addressed in the proposal are:

1. Data and Sample Statistics

a. Data and Sources

Explanation of data used and sources where data are collected including IMF, Statistics Department of various countries, Bank Negara Malaysia, UiTM Library, and others must be referenced accordingly.

b. Sample of Study

Sample of variables, time period, explanation of variables, formulas, expected signs, etc.

c. Statement of Hypothesis

A number of hypotheses relevant to the objectives set in the research plan including null or alternative hypothesis.

2. Statistical Method of Analysis

a. Types of Tests and Statistical Software Applied

The types of statistical software used including SPSS, EViews, STATA, or other statistical packages that will be used must be introduced. The different types of tests used in the study must be clearly explained including time series models, ARCH/GARCH, GMM estimator, error correction and VAR, maximum likelihood estimation, SUR, simultaneous equations models, panel models, non-linear models and many others. One simple example is the explanation of the regression equation in the simple/multiple regression analysis which applies the variables in its model. Explanation should also be provided for the relevant dependent and independent variables in the model.

b. Descriptive Statistics

In order to have a feel for the data collected for analysis, it is important to first check the data series for normality, stationarity, and other statistical problems including heteroscedasticity, autocorrelation, and multicollinearity. A general description of the data should provide the mean, standard deviation, max/ min, skewness and kurtosis of all the data series to be tested.

c. Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis testing is used when sample statistics are obtained to estimate the overall population decision in examining data. The following are the steps in conducting hypothesis tests:

Step 1: Statement of null and alternative hypotheses

Step 2: Selection of the appropriate statistical test

Step 3: Determination of the level of significance

Step 4: Calculate the value of the test statistics

Step 5: Make a decision to reject or not to reject the null hypotheses

T-test, p values or other statistical values are used to determine if there is significant relationship between IDV and DV. It also measures the probability of error in the predictive value. The confidence interval accepted normally is 95%. The rule of thumb also states that if the t-statistics is > 2, it indicates that a significant relationship exists between the independent and dependent variables.

d. Correlation Coefficient

Correlation coefficient, r, is the degree of association between independent and dependent variables. The coefficient ranges from +1 to -1. It is categorized into one of the following categories listed for linear correlation coefficient result:

r=1	Perfect positive linear correlation
0.75 < r < 1	Strong positive linear correlation
0 < r < 0.25	Weak positive linear correlation
r = 0	no linear correlation
-0.25 < r < 0	weak negative linear correlation
-1 < r < -0.75	Strong negative linear correlation
r = -1	Perfect negative linear correlation

e. Coefficient of Determination (R^2)

The coefficient of determination denoted by 'R^2' measures the proportion of variation in Y (dependent variable) that is explained by X (independent variable). In other words, this value measures how well the independent variables can explain the dependent variable in the regression model. The coefficient ranges from 0 to 1. A higher value of R^2 provides a better regression analysis result as compared to a lower value of R^2. This means that if R^2 value is high, it provides a more confident relationship between independent and dependent variables.

g. T-stats

T-statistic is used to determine if there is significant relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. It also measures the probable error in the predictive value. It is calculated by dividing the coefficient by the standard error and the confidence interval used is normally 95%. It is used when we test one population correlation coefficient when both variables are quantitative and when the sample is small.

h. *p* -values

Statistical tests that report the extent to which the test statistic disagrees with the null hypothesis when one wants to know what percentage of the sampling distribution lies beyond the sample statistics; most statistical computer programs report the results of statistical tests as probability values (*p* values). The *p* value is the probability of observing a sample value as extreme as, or more extreme than, the value actually observed, given that the null hypothesis is true, i.e. the probability of Type I error. The *p*-value is compared with the significance level (α), and on this basis the null hypothesis is either rejected or not rejected. If the *p*-value is less than the significance level, the null hypothesis is rejected and vice versa.

i. F-stats, F-Probability

The test statistic for ANOVA is the *F* ratio which compares the variance from the last 2 sources i.e. the between-group variance/within-group variance. To compute the F ratio, the sum of the squared deviations for the numerator and denominator are divided by their respective degrees of freedom. By dividing, we are computing the variance as an average or mean, thus the term *mean square*. The degree of freedom for the numerator, the mean square between groups, is one less than the number of groups (*k-1*). The degree of freedom for the denominator, the mean square within groups, is the total number of observations minus the number of groups (*n-k*). The higher the F-stats or the lower the f-prob, the more significant the model in explaining changes in the dependent variable.

2.4 CONTENT AND FORMAT OF ABP PROPOSAL

The ABP Proposal should comprise:

Chapter 1 : Introduction

Chapter 2 : Literature Review and Conceptual Framework/Academic Construct

Chapter 3 : Research Design and Methodology

References

Appendices

- Draft of Questionnaire/Interview Questions
- Research Gantt Chart

The **recommended total word** for the ABP Proposal is **8000 to 10000** (excluding references and appendices).

For the report formatting, please refer to the 'UiTM Thesis Template 6.0' which is prepared by the Institute of Post Graduate Studies (IPSIS). The template can be download via https://ipsis.uitm.edu.my/images/UiTMThesisTemplateV6.dotx.

With reference to Chart 2.1, Chapter 1 to Chapter 3 of the proposal should emphasize the following:

Chapter 1 – Issues in Step 1 and Step 2 of the research process must be clearly dealt with. A brief write-up of the **SELECTED ORGANIZATION** should be included.

Chapter 2 – Issues in Step 3 and Step 4 of the research must be addressed. Only essential information required towards the development of an academic construct or conceptual framework needs to be identified and elaborated. Authoritative sources must be quoted diligently, especially those within a specific area of functional areas of management. Conceptual framework/Academic construct is a MUST as it highlights the focus of your research and the methodology plan.

Chapter 3 – Issues in Step 5 of the research process. This section must provide arguments for your choice of methodology.

2.5 RESEARCH EXPECTATION

Keeping to deadline is a must. From the academic perspective, the Applied Business Project should be:

i. Purposive:

   Definite aim or purpose, i.e. purposive focus.

ii. Rigor:

   A good theoretical/conceptual/model base and a sound methodological design.

iii. Objective:

   Conclusions drawn through the interpretation of the results of data analysis should be objective; i.e. they should be based on the facts of the findings derived from actual data, and not on the researcher's own subjective or emotional values or imagination.

2.6 SUMMARY

The research proposal, as emphasized in the early part of this guideline, is the first document that provides evidence to your seriousness in pursuing and completing the MBA program. An ill-conceived proposal dooms. A high-quality proposal, on the other hand, not only promises success for the dissertation, but also impresses your advisor, examiner, and eventually your potential or current organization.

SECTION THREE: RESEARCH REPORT

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Naturally, the quality of the entire ABP is reflected in the written report. While writing styles may differ from one person to another, it must be noted that clarity and good organization of thought are important. In essence, writing a good report is a demanding task.

3.2 CONTENT AND FORMAT OF ABP FINAL REPORT

In almost any research work, the reporting is organized into **FIVE** basic chapters. The suggested structure and content for the ABP Final Report are provided in **Appendix 4**.

For the report formatting, please refer to the '**UiTM Thesis Template 6.0**' which is prepared by the Institute of Post Graduate Studies (IPSIS). The template can be download via https://ipsis.uitm.edu.my/images/UiTMThesisTemplateV6.dotx.

The **minimum total word** of the **ABP Final Report** is **15000** (excluding references and appendices). It is guided by the MQA Program Standards of Business Studies 2021.

3.3 CONCLUSION

While this ABP Guideline aims to provide sufficient guide for the MBA students to prepare for the Applied Business Project, this guideline is by no means conclusive and comprehensive. This is where the guidance of your research advisor must be sought, observed and respected.

Appendix I
List of Possible Research Areas

A. Organic Business Development Projects

New Products
New Markets
Value-Creating
Distribution Channels
New Technologies.

B. Projects Involving Strategic and Financial Planning.

C. Restructuring Projects.

D. Information Systems Projects.

E. Management Buyout Projects.

F. Alliance and Joint Venture Projects.

G. Operational Projects

- Operational expansion
- Cost management and efficiency
- Activity Based Costing (ABC)
- Business Process Engineering

H. Value Chain and Supply Chain.

I. Any others focusing on your current environmental challenges as long as the basic conceptual framework is based on any of the functional areas of management and business operations, which form the entire MBA Curriculum.

Appendix 2
Sample of Research Title, Objective and Academic Construct

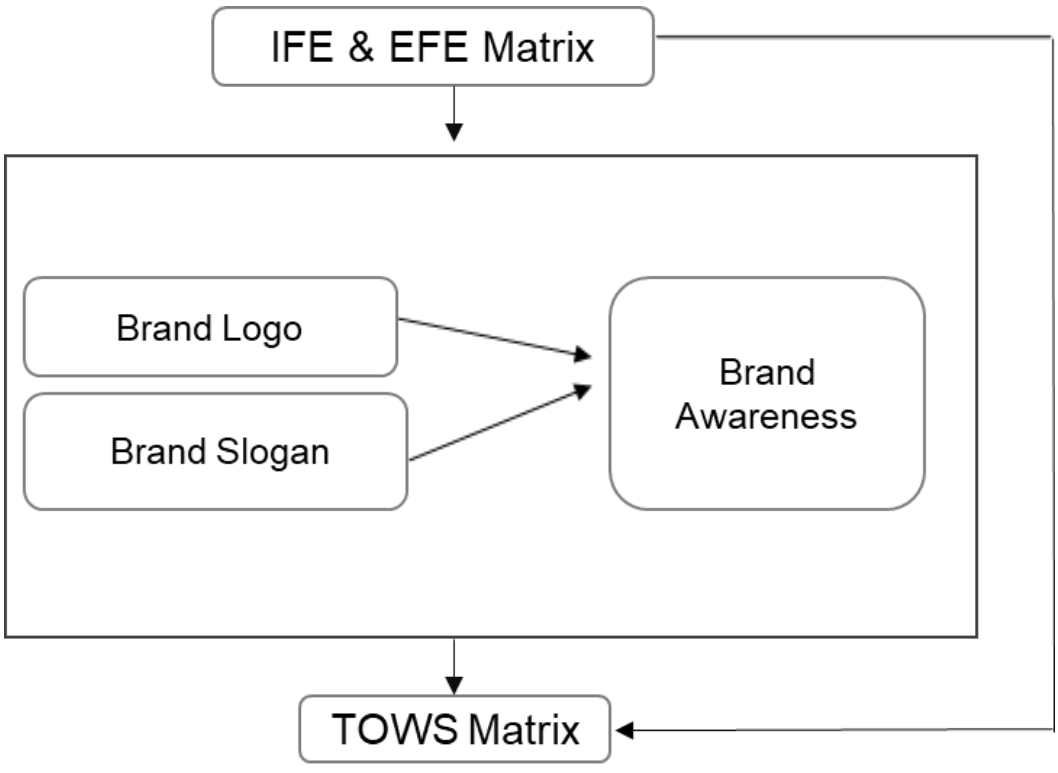
Project 1

Research Title: Examining the Influence of Aesthetic Brand Elements on Brand Awareness for XX

Research Objectives:

1. To perform a situational analysis of XX Company
2. To ascertain the current level of brand awareness for XX
3. To ascertain the influence of aesthetic brand elements (brand name, brand logo, brand slogan and packaging) on brand awareness for XX brand
4. To recommend measures that could enhance brand awareness for XX brand

Academic Construct:



Appendix 3
Business Models/Tools

- Gap Analysis
- SWOT Analysis / TOWS Matrix
- PEST Analysis
- Growth Drivers
- Fishbone Technique
- Porter's Five Forces
- GE Grid
- BCG Matrix
- Ansoff Model
- Motivator-Hygiene Factors
- Uncertainty Grid
- Ratios Analysis
- Sensitivity Analysis
- Cost-Benefit Analysis
- Tools of Strategic Analysis
- Shareholder Value Analysis (SVA)
- Decision Tree
- Profit Impact Marketing Strategy (PIMS)
- Game Theory
- Attractiveness –Implementation – Difficulty (AID) Grid
- Force-Field Analysis
- Stakeholders Analysis
- Scenario Building

Note: The listing is NOT EXHAUSTIVE

Appendix 4
ABP Final Report: Suggested Structure and Content

ABSTRACT

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preamble
1.2 Background of the study
1.3 Problem statement
1.4 Research objectives
1.5 Research questions
1.6 Scope of the study
1.7 Significance of the study
1.8 Definition of terms
1.9 Chapter summary

CHAPTER TWO - LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Preamble
2.2 Key literature on strategic tool (s) (review of the proposed strategic tools-relate to Research Objective 1)
2.3 Key literature on concepts/variables of the study (relate to Research Objective 2 & 3)
2.4 Conceptual framework/academic construct
2.5 Chapter Summary

CHAPTER THREE – RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preamble
3.2 The research design
3.3 Sampling design
3.4 Research instrument
3.5 The fieldwork and data collection method (relate to Research Objectives)
3.6 Data analysis technique (s) (relate to Research Objectives)
3.7 Chapter Summary

Appendix 4
ABP Final Report: Suggested Structure and Content

CHAPTER FOUR – ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1	Preamble
4.2	Findings of SWOT Analysis or any other strategic tool used (to answer Research Objective 1)
4.3	Profile of respondents
4.5	Descriptive Analysis
4.6	Reliability Analysis
4.7	Correlation Analysis/Multiple Regression Analysis/T-Test/F-Test (where relevant to answer Research Objective 2 & 3)
4.8	TOWS Analysis or any other strategic tool used (to develop possible recommendations)
4.9	Chapter summary

CHAPTER FIVE – CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1	Preamble
5.2	Conclusion
5.3	Strategic Recommendation (selected recommendation based on the results of TOWS Analysis or any other strategic tool employed -see sub-section 4.7: to answer the final Research Objective)
5.4	Chapter Summary

References

Appendices

*In terms of formatting such as 'title page', 'font size', 'spacing', 'margin' and so forth, please refer to the 'UiTM Thesis Template' https://ipsis.uitm.edu.my/images/UiTMThesisTemplateV6.dotx

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