

RESEARCH POSTGRADUATE MPhil and PhD THESIS RUBRIC

Suggested Guidelines (School of Creative Arts)

This rubric is designed to assist in the evaluation of research postgraduate students' ability to successfully prepare their thesis and is applicable to all programmes that have a thesis requirement. The rubric includes evaluation criteria, and allows for the addition of criteria important to individual academy/programmes. The rubric below is for reference only and examiners are invited to complete the “*Thesis Assessment Form*” sent with the invitation letter.

This rubric should:

1. provide research postgraduate students with a clear understanding of the elements of their written MPhil/PhD thesis deemed most important to the defense committee;
2. provide multiple perspectives on students' ability to successfully prepare their research in respect to their chosen field of study;
3. encourage conversations among academy colleagues about improving graduate student learning outcomes and assessment;
4. serve as a potential source of programme-level learning resources on the attainment of the programme's learning outcome, for submission as part of their assessment report.

Characteristics of the Introduction/Literature Review:

1. Includes a substantive literature review that places the student's research within its appropriate scholarly context;
2. Identifies the specific gaps in knowledge that the student intends to address;
3. Makes an argument for the broader significance of his/her research when addressing these.

Characteristics of the Methodology:

1. Provides an overview of the methodological approach;
2. Provides sufficient details so that readers can judge the appropriateness of the quantitative/qualitative methods;

Characteristics of the Results:

1. Describes the scholarly rationale, approach and findings;
2. Interprets the results within the specific scholarly context constructed in the Introduction ;

Characteristics of the Discussion/Conclusion:

1. Briefly highlights major significance and contribution to the field, acknowledging complexities of the research, as well as inconsistencies and limitations;
2. Explicitly relates the implications of their research findings (results) within the scholarly context constructed in the introduction. The narrative should draw connections between the student's research findings and other published work;
3. Highlights how the study could lead to future research within the field;

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For each of the categories, assign a score of 0 through 4. Enter scores in the rightmost column. Evaluators are encouraged to assign a zero to any work sample that does not meet the benchmark level performance.

	Exceeds Expectation 4	Meets Expectation 3 2		Below Expectation 1	Unacceptable 0	Score
Introduction /Literature Review						
Evidence	Current, comprehensive, complete; shows evaluative knowledge of the primary literature; critically evaluates opinions of the relevant scholars in the field.	Current and complete; shows knowledge of the primary literature; evaluates some opinions of the relevant scholars in the field.	Current but not comprehensive; shows some knowledge of the primary literature; accepts most opinions of the relevant scholars in the field.	Current but incomplete; shows some knowledge of some of the primary literature; accepts opinions of a few scholars in the field.	Hastily prepared; limited in scope; neither current nor complete; does not critically evaluate opinions of the relevant scholars in the field.	
Research question/ Theme/rationale	Research question(s)/theme is clear; develops a convincing rationale for the research question(s);	Research question(s)/theme is clear; develops a reasonable rationale for the research question(s); reader can discern theme.	Research question(s)/theme is present; rationale for the research question(s) available but difficult to follow; does not guide the reader directly to the theme.	Research question(s)/theme is present but rationale is not appropriate; does not clearly direct reader to the theme.	No research question(s)/theme; no rationale for the study.	
Synthesis of literature	Provides a focused synthesis of the literature; shows an excellent relationship between the literature and the research question(s).	Provides a mostly focused synthesis of the literature but some fragmentation; shows a good relationship between the literature and the research question(s).	Provides a modest synthesis of the literature; relationship between the literature and the research question(s) is present and is partially developed.	Provides some synthesis of the literature; relationship between the literature and the research question(s) is present but not developed.	Literature is fragmented; no synthesis.	
Methodology						
Research Design	Appropriate, clear; describes procedures in detail, precisely	Appropriate procedures; described in detail, always with logical and coherent	Appropriate procedures; described in detail; sometimes with logical	Appropriate procedures; described in minimal detail; missing some	Omits important information; insufficient detail; illogical or	

	attention to relevant detail; logical and coherent argumentation; applies new methods or comes up with novel approach.	argumentation	and coherent argumentation	logical/argumentative cohesion but findings can still stand.	incoherent argumentation	
Execution of procedures	Shows evidence of rigorous attention to detail and pursuit of all available primary sources.	Shows evidence of good observation/attention to detail, and pursuit of available primary sources.	Shows evidence of acceptable observation/attention to detail.	Shows evidence of minimally acceptable observation; attention to detail and primary sources occasionally inconsistent or inadequate.	Shows evidence of sloppy or inadequate attention to potential sources.	
Handling of research evidence	Shows novel insight; always accurately organizes research evidence into patterns; always connects patterns to arguments.	Consistently organizes research evidence into patterns; most of the patterns are connected to arguments.	Consistently organizes research evidence; some research evidence organized into patterns; some patterns are connected to arguments.	Consistently organizes research evidence, though not necessarily in patterns; research evidence connected to arguments but rarely in patterns.	Shows little insight; research evidence not organized; misses patterns in research evidence; no connection to arguments.	
Research evidence Presentation	Unambiguous and clearly presented; shows creativity in presentation.	Unambiguous and clearly presented.	Acceptably presented.	Acceptably but not clearly presented.	Hastily prepared; poorly presented; ambiguous.	
Results						
Communication of Results	Findings are communicated clearly, and reveal the meaningful relationships that exist in the research evidence.	Findings are communicated with some clarity, and reveal some meaningful relationships that exist in the research evidence.	Results are adequately stated in an academically appropriate manner.	Results are simply stated in an objective manner, without concern for argumentation or persuasion.	Does not present findings.	
Discussion & Conclusion						

Discussion	Provides a compelling discussion of the implications of the research, situating its importance within the context of current knowledge.	Makes a good attempt to discuss the implications of the research.	Makes an adequate attempt to discuss the implications of the research.	Makes a partial attempt to discuss the implications of the research.	Makes no attempt to discuss the implications of the research.	
Conclusions	<p>Conclusion is extremely clear, succinct, and complete.</p> <p>Conclusion clearly follows from findings, is accurately described in detail in terms of the analysis of the research evidence, showing excellent methodological and conceptual rigor.</p>	<p>Conclusion is clear, succinct, and complete.</p> <p>Conclusion clearly follows from results and is explained in terms of the analysis of the research evidence, showing good methodological and conceptual rigor.</p>	<p>Conclusion is mostly clear, succinct, and complete.</p> <p>Conclusion adequately follows from results and is explained in terms of the analysis of the research evidence, showing adequate methodological and conceptual rigor.</p>	<p>Conclusion is often unclear; not succinct.</p> <p>Conclusion partially follows from results and is explained in terms of the analysis of the research evidence, showing partial methodological and conceptual rigor.</p>	<p>Conclusion is not clear; not succinct; not complete.</p> <p>Conclusion does not clearly follow from the results.</p>	
Interpretation	Can back up all interpretation with valid results; does not claim conclusions that are not evident from the research evidence.	Can back up most interpretation with valid results; does not claim conclusions that are not evident from the research evidence.	Can back up most interpretation with valid results but some interpretations are far-fetched; does not claim conclusions that are not evident from the research evidence.	Can back up most interpretation with valid results; but some interpretations are far-fetched.	Can not back up all interpretation with valid results; claims conclusions that are not evident from the research evidence.	
Synthesis /Understanding	Synthesizes and integrates all research evidence; clear understanding of significance and contribution to the field.	Synthesizes and integrates most research evidence; shows some understanding of significance and contribution to the field.	Synthesizes and integrates some of the research evidence; shows basic understanding of significance and contribution to the field. but not all their implications.	Some understanding of significance and contribution to the field but partial synthesis, misses implications.	Does not explain or understand the significance and contribution to the field.	
Integration with current knowledge	Excellent use of citations, paraphrases, and summaries and thorough integration	Good use of citations and integration of findings with the current literature.	Adequate use of citations, paraphrases, and summaries and adequate integration of findings	Partial use of citations, paraphrases, and summaries but minimal integration of findings with the current	Improper use of citations, paraphrases, and summaries and fails to integrate findings	

	of findings with the current literature.		with some of the current literature.	literature.	with the current literature.	
Extrapolation and global significance	Shows insight into the question and extrapolates to future questions; shows evidence of significance beyond the specific research field; discusses broader impact; says something about the societal importance of findings.	Shows insight into the question and extrapolates to future questions; shows evidence of significance beyond the specific research field.	Shows insight into the question and extrapolates to future questions; shows some evidence of significance beyond the specific research field.	Shows some insight into the question and extrapolates to future questions; shows little evidence of significance beyond the specific research field.	Shows no insight into the question; shows no evidence of significance beyond the specific research field; does not discuss the broader impact or the societal importance of findings.	
Limitations	Discusses the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; offers appropriate solutions.	Discusses the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; offers reasonable solutions.	Modest discussion of the limitations of the study and how these limitations moderate conclusions; does not offer solutions.	Minimal discussion of the limitations of the study and does not offer solutions.	No discussion of the limitations of the study.	

References:

Adapted/derived from the:

[“Honors College: Rubric for the Written Thesis,”](#) University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

[“Rubric for Evaluating MS Thesis or PhD Dissertation and Defense \(Final Oral Exam\),”](#) Georgia Health Sciences University, Augusta, Georgia

[“Written Material Rubric,”](#) Texas Women’s University, Denton, Texas