

DISSERTATION DEFENSE RUBRIC

Dissertation Title:

DATE:

COMMITTEE MEMBER:

[Please return to the Committee Chair or School of Educational Studies, Harper 202](#)

RESEARCH QUESTION

- Level 1: Has a research question or problem that is trivial, weak, unoriginal or already solved
- Level 2: Has a research question that is not significant, is often highly derivative, or an extension of the adviser's work; is narrow in scope
- Level 3: Has a research question or problem that tends to be small and traditional; is the next step in a research program (good normal science)
- Level 4: Asks new questions or addresses an important question or problem; clearly states the problem and why it is important

WRITING

- Level 1: Writing lacks independent and authoritative voice; has frequent spelling and grammatical errors; limited vocabulary; presentation lacks organizational logic.
- Level 2: Writing is not expressive often lacking independent and authoritative voice; mostly free of mechanical errors; emergent vocabulary; presentation sometimes loses organizational logic
- Level 3: Writing is sometimes expressive in terms of independent and authoritative voice; free of mechanical errors; developed vocabulary; organized in a logical and coherent organizational framework
- Level 4: Writing is expressive consistently demonstrating an independent and authoritative voice; free of mechanical errors, highly developed vocabulary; is organized in a logical and coherent organizational framework

THESIS DEVELOPMENT

- Level 1: Lacks originality, insight, thoughtfulness and clarity; often loses coherence; may ramble; has a weak, inconsistent, self-contradictory, unconvincing, or invalid argument
- Level 2: Is workmanlike, and generally coherent; rarely insightful; argument may be coherent or comprehensive but not both
- Level 3: Is clear, coherent, concise, creative, thoughtful; sometimes insightful; has a comprehensive, and coherent argument
- Level 4: Is original insightful, persuasive, sophisticated, and thoughtful; exhibits mature, independent thinking; argument is focused, logical, rigorous, and sustained; connects components in a seamless way

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Level 1: Relies on inappropriate or incorrect methods; data are flawed, wrong, or false
- Level 2: Uses standard methods; data are sometimes incomplete
- Level 3: Demonstrates technical competence; uses appropriate (standard) theory, methods, and techniques
- Level 4: Original, unique, or otherwise highly effective research design; uses or develops new tools, methods, or approaches; has rich data from multiple sources

ANALYTIC THINKING

- Level 1: Wrong, inappropriate, incoherent, or confused analysis; includes results that are obvious, already know, unexplained, or misinterpreted; has unsupported or exaggerated interpretation
- Level 2: Unsophisticated analysis; does not explore all possibilities; misses connections; has predictable results
- Level 3: Obtains solid, expected results or answers; misses opportunities to completely explore interesting issues and connections
- Level 4: Analysis is comprehensive, complete, sophisticated; results are significant; conclusion ties the work together

THEORY KNOWLEDGE

- Level 1: Does not understand or misses relevant literature; does not understand theory well; theory is missing or wrong; does not understand basic concepts, processes, or conventions of the discipline
- Level 2: Displays a narrow understanding of the field; reviews literature adequately; knows the literature but is not critical of it or does not discuss what is important; demonstrates understanding of theory at a simple level, and theory is minimally to competently applied to the problem
- Level 3: Shows understanding and mastery of the subject matter
- Level 4: Displays a deep understanding of a massive amount of complicated literature; exhibits command and authority over the material; is theoretically sophisticated and shows a deep understanding of theory

IMPACT

- Level 1: Is of no interest to a larger community; does not make a contribution to the field
- Level 2: May be of interest to a narrow segment of the community; makes a small contribution to the field
- Level 3: Is of interest to a moderate segment of the community; unlikely to change the way people think; makes a modest contribution to the field but does not open it up; may be publishable in second-tier journals
- Level 4: Is of interest to a larger community and changes the way people think; pushes the discipline's boundaries and opens new areas for research; is publishable in top-tier journals