

Dissertation Research Grading Rubric

The purpose of this grading rubric is to support your development as a scholar-researcher during the dissertation process. Your committee will use this rubric to evaluate your proposal and dissertation, and communicate feedback about necessary revisions that will help you complete this project.

As you write, use this rubric as an outline for your study proposal and final dissertation.

5=Exceptional Scholarship

4=Acceptable Scholarship; all vital elements are satisfactory

3=Approvable Scholarship; however revisions would be needed in one or more important areas for an actual proposal

2=Not Acceptable Scholarship; one or two important areas are not sufficiently presented

1=Not Acceptable Scholarship; more than two important areas are not sufficiently presented

Ratings of 3 or above are satisfactory, while ratings 2 and below do not meet minimal standards to pass.

Section and Quality Indicators	Specific Comments and Feedback	Rating
Cover Page Formatted correctly		
Abstract		
A. Describes the research problem and why it is important		
B. States research purpose		
C. Summarizes research question(s)		
D. Briefly describes the research design, methods and data analysis procedures		
Section I: Introduction		
1. Clearly demonstrates the significance of problem and worthiness of the study.		
2. A summary of the problem is well articulated and substantiates the study with references to more detailed discussions in Section 2.		
3. The problem statement describes the need for increased understanding about the issue to be studied.		
4. The nature of the study, specific research questions, and research objectives are briefly and clearly described. Reference is made to more detailed discussions in Section 3.		
5. The purpose of the study is described in a logical, explicit manner.		
6. The conceptual framework shows which ideas from the contemporary scholarship support/justify the research being conducted		

7. Key terms are operationally defined		
8. Assumptions, Limitations, Scope, and Delimitations provide descriptions of: A. Facts assumed to be true but not verified B. Potential weaknesses of the study C. The bounds of the study		
9. The Significance of the Study is described in terms of A. How the study can be applied to the local problem B. Professional application C. Positive social change (improvement of human or social conditions by promoting the worth, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies)		
10. Section I ends with a transition statement that contains a summary or key points of the study and an overview of the content of the remaining sections in the study		
Section II: Literature Review		
1. There is an introduction that describes: A. The content of the review the review B. The organization of the review C. The strategy used for searching the literature		
2. The review of related research and literature is clearly related to the problem statement as expressed in the research questions and objectives		
3. The review of the related research and literature includes A. Comparisons/contrasts of different points of view of different research outcomes B. The relationship of the study to the previous empirical research that has come before it		
4. The review contains concise summaries of literatures that help A. Define the most important aspects of the study; B. Substantiate the rationale of conceptual framework for the study		
5. There is a literature based description of the potential themes and perceptions explored in the study		
7. Literature related to the research method is reviewed		
8. Literature related to the use of differing methodologies to investigating the outcomes of interest is reviewed		
9. The review is an integrated, critical essay on the most relevant and current published knowledge on the topic. The review is organized around major themes.		
Section III. Research Method – Qualitative Studies		

1. Introduction describes how the research design derives logically from the problem or issue statement		
2. Design describes which qualitative tradition or research design will be used. The choice of research design is justified, with explanation why other likely choices would be less effective		
3. Research questions and sub-questions make sense, are answerable, are few in number, are clearly stated, and are open-ended.		
4. The context for the study is described and justified.		
5. Methods for ethical protection of participants are clearly explained step by step. Procedures for gaining access to participants are described.		
6. Role of the Researcher A. The role of the researcher is described in terms of past/current professional roles at setting, past/current professional relationships with the participants, and how these past/current roles and relationships are likely to affect data collection. B. Methods of establishing a researcher-participant working relation are appropriate C. The researcher's experiences or biases related to the topic are described		
7. Criteria for selecting participants are specified and are appropriate to the study. There is a justification for the number of participants, which is balanced with depth of inquiry-the fewer the participants the deeper the inquiry per individual		
8. Data collection procedures are explained in detail. Data collection tools such as interview guide, observation guide, etc. are included in the Appendix. Choices about which data to collect are justified. Data collected are appropriate to answer the questions posed in relation to the qualitative tradition chosen. How and when the data was collected and recorded is described.		
9. How the data was analyzed is articulated. Procedures for dealing with discrepant cases are described. If a software program is used in the analysis, it is clearly described. Data analysis procedures after coding are described.		
10. Methods to address validity or trustworthiness (i.e. member-checking) are appropriate and specific.		
Section III. Research Method – Quantitative Studies		

1. Introduction includes a clear outline of the major areas of the section.		
2. Research Design and approach A. Includes a description of the research design and approach. B. Provides justification for using the design and approach. C. Derives logically from the problem or issue statement.		
3. Setting and Sample A. Describes the population from which the sample will be or was drawn. B. Describes and defends the sampling method including the sampling frame used. C. Describes and defends the sample size. D. Describes the eligibility criteria for study participants. E. Describes characteristics of the selected sample.		
4. If a treatment is used, it is described clearly and in detail.		
5. Instrumentation and Materials A. Presents descriptions of instrumentation or data collection tools to include: name of instrument; type of instrument; concepts measured by instrument; how scores are calculated and their meaning; processes for assessment of reliability and validity of the instrument(s); processes needed to complete instruments by participants; where raw data are or will be available (appendices, tables, or by request from the researcher). B. Includes a detailed description of data that comprise each variable in the study.		
6. Data Collection and Analysis A. Includes an explanation of descriptive and/or inferential analyses used in the study, such as: nature of the scale for each variable; statements of hypotheses related to each research question; description of parametric, nonparametric, or descriptive analytical tools used; and description of data collection processes. B. Description of any pilot study results, if applicable.		
7. Measures taken from protection of participants' rights are summarized. The Role of the Researcher in the data collection and data analysis procedures is described. The role of the researcher is described in terms of past/current professional roles at the setting, past/current professional relationships with the participants, how these past/current roles and relationships are likely to affect data collection.		
Section III. Research Method – Mixed Method Studies		

1. Introduction includes a clarification of the intent of mixing qualitative and quantitative data in a single study and an outline of which components are qualitative and which are quantitative.		
2. Research Design and Approach A. Indicates the strategy for data collection (concurrent or sequential) B. Includes a description of the multiple forms of data collection and analysis C. Provides justification for using the design and approach D. Includes when and where (data collection, analysis, interpretation) the integration of the approaches will occur.		
3 Setting and Sample A. Describes the population from which the sample will be/was drawn B. Describes and defends the sampling method, including the sampling frame used C. Describes and defends the sample size D. Describes the eligibility criteria for study participants E. Describes the characteristics of the selected sample F. Describes the role of the researcher in the data collection procedure		
4. Treatment and/or questions are clarified as being gathered sequentially or concurrently and connects to the objectives and questions of the study.		
5. The context and sequential or concurrent strategies for the study are described and justified.		
<u>For the qualitative sequence:</u> A. Procedures for gaining access to participants are described B. Methods of establishing a researcher-participant working relationship are appropriate C. Data triangulation is built into the data collection and analysis		
<u>For the quantitative sequence of the design:</u> A. Presents descriptions of instrumentation or data collection tools to include: 1. Name and type of instrument and/or data to be collected. 2. Concepts measured by instrument and/or data. 3. How scores/responses are calculated/rated and their meaning. 4. Process for assessing reliability and validity of the instrument(s) or internal validity/reliability.		

<p><u>For the quantitative sequence of the design (cont.):</u></p> <p>5. Procedure for participants to complete instruments.</p> <p>6. Where raw data are or will be available (appendixes, tables, questions, or by request from the researcher).</p> <p>B. Includes a detailed description of data that comprise each variable in the study.</p>		
<p>6. Data Analysis and Validation Procedure</p> <p>A. Identifies the procedures within the design.</p> <p>B. Analysis occurs within the quantitative approach and the qualitative approach, and/or between the two approaches.</p> <p>C. Validity of both the quantitative data and the qualitative findings is checked.</p>		
<p>7. Measures taken for protection of participants' rights are summarized. The Role of the Researcher in the data collection and data analysis procedures is described. The role of the researcher is described in terms of past/current professional roles at the setting, past/current professional relationships with the participants, how these past/current roles and relationships are likely to affect data collection, and the researcher's experiences or biases that are related to the topic.</p>		
Section 4: Findings – Qualitative Studies		
<p>1. The process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded is clearly described.</p>		
<p>2. The systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings (research logs, reflective journals, cataloging systems) are clearly described.</p>		
<p>3. The findings</p> <p>A. build logically from the problem and the research design.</p> <p>B. are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions</p>		
<p>4. Discrepant cases and non-confirming data are included in the findings.</p>		
<p>5. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data. All salient data are accounted for in the findings.</p>		
<p>6. A discussion on Evidence of Quality shows how this study followed procedures to assure accuracy of the data (i.e., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.). Appropriate evidence occurs in the appendices (sample transcripts, researcher logs, field notes, etc.). (This discussion may appear in section 5 instead of 4).</p>		

Section 4: Findings – Quantitative Studies

1. Section 4 is structured around the research questions and/or hypotheses addressed in the study, reporting findings related to each.		
2. Research tools: A. Data collection instruments have been used correctly. B. Measures obtained are reported clearly, following standard procedures. C. Adjustments or revisions to the use of standardized research instruments have been justified, consistent with standard practices, and any effects or limitations on the interpretation of findings are clearly described.		
3. Overall, data analysis (presentation, interpretation, explanation) is consistent with the research questions or hypotheses and underlying theoretical/conceptual framework of the study.		
4. Data analyses A. logically and sequentially address all research questions or hypotheses. B. where appropriate, outcomes of hypothesis-testing procedures are clearly reported (e.g., findings support or fail to support....). C. do not contain any evident statistical errors.		
5. Tables and Figures A. are as self-descriptive as possible, informative, formatted to conform to standard dissertation styles. B. are directly related to and referred to within the narrative text included in the section. C. have immediately adjacent comments. D. are properly identified (titled or captioned). E. show copyright permission (if not in the public domain).		
6. The comments on findings address observed consistencies and inconsistencies and discuss possible alternate interpretations.		
7. In a concluding section of Section 4, outcomes are logically and systematically summarized and interpreted in relation to their importance to the research questions and hypotheses.		

Section 4: Findings – Mixed Method Studies

1. The strategy (sequential, concurrent, or transformative) of the study is clearly established. Data are presented in the appropriate manner for the type of study conducted.		
2. The systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings is clearly described.		
3. The findings: A. Build logically from the problem and the research design. B. Are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions. C. Are consistent with the research questions or hypotheses and the underlying theoretical/conceptual framework of the study. D. Are clearly reported (e.g., findings support or fail to support . . .) and are supported by the data. E. Do not contain any evident statistical errors.		
4. Tables and Figures for both the qualitative and quantitative data: A. Are as self-descriptive as possible, informative, and conform to standard Doctoral Study format. B. Are directly related to and referred to within the narrative text of the section. C. Have immediately adjacent comments. D. Are properly identified (titled or captioned). E. Show copyright permission (if not in the public domain).		
5. The structural approach for presenting and analyzing the data are appropriate and consistent with the chosen strategy (sequential, concurrent, or transformative).		
6. In a concluding section of Section 4, outcomes are logically and systematically summarized and interpreted in relation to their importance to the research questions and hypotheses. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data.		
7. A discussion on Evidence of Quality shows how this study followed procedures to assure accuracy of the data (trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.). Appropriate evidence occurs in the appendixes (sample transcripts, researcher logs, field notes, etc.).		

Section 5: Discussion

1. The section begins with a brief Overview of why and how the study was done, reviewing the questions or issues being addressed and a brief summary of the findings		
2. The Interpretation of Findings A. includes conclusions that address all of the research questions, B. contains references to outcomes in Section 4, C. covers all the data, D. is bounded by the evidence collected, and E. relates the findings to a larger body of literature on the topic, including the conceptual/theoretical framework, F. includes a discussion of the practical applications of the findings.		
3. The Implications for Social Change are clearly grounded in the significance section of Section 1 and outcomes presented in Section 4. The implications are expressed in terms of tangible improvements to individuals, communities, organizations, institutions, cultures, or societies.		
4. Recommendations for Action. A. should flow logically from the conclusions and B. state who needs to pay attention to the results, and C. indicate how the results might be disseminated.		
5. Recommendations for Further Study point to topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of questions.		
6. For qualitative studies, includes a reflection on the researcher's experience with the research process in which the researcher discusses possible personal biases or preconceived ideas and values, the possible effects of the researcher on the participants or the situation, and her/his changes in thinking as a result of the study.		
7. The work closes with a strong concluding statement making the "take-home message" clear to the reader		
Also Submitted: (For our post-dissertation publication project): A. Author Guidelines from Selected Journal B. Two Qualitative Studies from this Journal		

General Comments: Applies to the Entire Manuscript		
<p>Writing Style and Composition: The research study is written in scholarly language (accurate, balanced, objective, tentative). The writing is clear, precise, and avoids redundancy. Statements are specific and topical sentences are established for paragraphs. The flow of words is smooth and comprehensible. Bridges are established between ideas.</p>		
<p>Organization and Form The proposal/final research study A. is logically and comprehensively organized, using subheadings where appropriate. B. has a professional, scholarly appearance. C. is written with correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling. D. includes citations for the following: direct quotations, paraphrasing, facts, and references to research studies. E. in-text citations are found in the reference list.</p>		