|  | **1 – Unacceptable** | **2 – Acceptable** | **3 – Very Good** | **4 – Outstanding** | **N/A** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Introduction: statement of Research Question and Hypothesis** | • Raises a trivial, unimportant, or nonexistent problem in the field and/or misapplies data.  • Defines the problem and its context in an incoherent or confused manner.  • Does not make a case for importance.  • States no valid research question.  • Offers no more than a vestigial hypothesis or solution. | • Raises a lesser or minor problem in the field and/or reworks existing data.  • May be derivative.  • Defines the problem and its context.  • Makes an adequate case for importance.  • Extracts a derivative or limited research question from the problem.  • Offers an acceptable hypothesis or solution. | • Raises a worthwhile problem in the field and/or presents useful new data.  • Makes a good case for its importance.  • Extracts a valid research question from the problem.  • Offers a satisfactory hypothesis or solution.  • Defines the problem and its context well. | • Raises a significant, original, and interesting problem in the field and/or presents important new data.  • Defines the problem and its context clearly and compellingly.  • Persuasively makes a strong case for its importance. Concisely extracts an important research question from the problem.  • Offers an innovative, striking hypothesis or solution to the problem/question. |  |
| **Literature Survey** | • Provides an incomplete, inadequate survey of secondary literature.  • Misunderstands or misinterprets secondary sources.  • Does not engage state of scholarship on the topic. | • Provides an acceptable survey of secondary literature, but with some notable gaps.  • Understands most of the sources.  • Generally, places the dissertation into the context of secondary sources.  • Repeats the extant scholarship.  • Knowledge does not extend beyond named secondary sources. | • Provides a comprehensive survey of secondary literature but may miss a few key works.  • Places the research question in the context of secondary sources.  • Understands secondary sources and integrates them into the discussion.  • Engages the extant scholarship.  • Does not move beyond the extant secondary sources. | • Provides a comprehensive survey of all critical and relevant secondary sources and materials appropriate to the research question.  • Clearly shapes the research question in the context of secondary sources.  • Has mastered secondary sources and approaches them analytically, skillfully.  • Intellectually engages the work of the best scholars.  • Shows how the dissertation will move beyond the extant secondary sources. |  |
| **Methodology, Theoretical Structure, or Approach** | • Has no identifiable approach or has an inappropriate approach.  • Cannot define either the approach or the structure precisely.  • Is not persuasive. | • Selects an approach but may not sustain it through the dissertation.  • Takes the theoretical paradigm/method for granted and applies it mechanically.  • Generally, explains the approach.  • Persuades the reader that the approach has some merit. | • Uses an approach that is suitable to the material.  • Accepts the theoretical paradigm/method and applies it.  • Explains the application of the theoretical or methodological structure.  • Persuades the reader that the approach is suitable and productive. | • Uses a well-conceived, well-designed, coherent, best approach to the material.  • Challenges, questions, and adapts the theoretical paradigm/ method to fit own research project.  • Clearly presents and defends the selected theoretical/methodological structure.  • Persuades the reader that the approach is innovative and compelling. |  |
| **Exposition, Analysis, Presentation of evidence in support of hypothesis** | • No summary or incompetent summary. • Does not understand results.  • Makes claims that have not been demonstrated.  • Draws no conclusions.  • Does not address directions for future research. | • Analysis is pedestrian, but adequate.  • Uses documentation and evidence adequately.  • Demonstrates adequate control of bibliographic, documentary, and research skills.  • Writes pedestrian prose.  • Produces some results.  • Answers the research question. | • Analysis is competent, solid, and convincing.  • Uses documentation and evidence effectively and competently.  • Demonstrates competent control of bibliographic, documentary, and research skills.  • Writes well.  • Produces usable results.  • Answers the research question competently. | • Analysis is comprehensive, sophisticated, and convincing.  • Uses documentation and evidence expertly and adroitly.  • Demonstrates superior control of bibliographic, documentary, and research skills.  • Writes with style, flair, and facility.  • Produces meaningful results.  • Answers the research question persuasively and compellingly. |  |
| **Conclusion** | •No summary or incompetent summary.  • Does not understand results.  • Makes claims that have not been demonstrated.  • Draws no conclusions.  • Does not address directions for future research. | • Summarizes what has been accomplished (touches on the "so what" question).  • Repeats major points.  • Does not address significance or implications of research for field.  • Does not address significance or implications of work for field.  • Weak discussion of directions for future research. | • Provides a good summary or work (answers the “so what” question).  • States contributions.  • Points at possible implications of research for field.  • Speculates about place of work in broader context of field.  • Identifies some | • Has a clear, concise, insightful conclusion (answers the “so what” question elegantly).  • Ties all the pieces together.  • Clearly states major findings, their significance, and their implications.  • Discusses strengths and weaknesses of investigation.  • Clearly places work in broader context of the field.  • Anticipates and responds to possible criticism.  • Lays out future directions for research. |  |
| **Style & Overall Quality** | • Poorly written and unorganized.  • Has not understood and mastered the material or method.  • Unaware of basic conventions of the field.  • Not persuasive.  • Is derivative, redundant, does not advance the field.  • Is not part of the scholarly conversation.  • Demonstrates weak, incoherent, or confused thinking.  • Descriptors: Flawed, inarticulate, insignificant, problematical, trivial, unconvincing, undigested, unoriginal. | • Adequately written and organized.  • Shows adequate understanding and some mastery of the material and method.  • Is linear, mechanical, pedestrian.  • Is workmanlike and competent as far as it goes but does not go far.  • Shows potential to engage in the scholarly conversation.  • Demonstrates an adequate degree of critical and coherent thinking.  • Descriptors: Adequate, derivative, limited, predictable, unsophisticated, workmanlike. | • Well-written and organized.  • Shows strong understanding and mastery of the material and method.  • Aware of conventions in the field.  • Provides food for thought.  • Is a solid contribution that advances the field.  • Engages in the larger scholarly conversation.  • Demonstrates capacity for critical, coherent, mature, and independent thinking.  • Descriptors: Capable, competent, effective, engaging, knowledgeable, significant, solid, strong, substantive, well-done. | • Exceptionally well-written and organized.  • Shows superior understanding and deep mastery of both material and method.  • Thoroughly researched. Is thoughtful, concise, persuasive.  • Is an original, significant contribution that promises to innovate in the field.  • Engages in scholarly conversation with leading scholars.  • Sustains consistently high level of critical, coherent, mature, and independent thinking.  • Descriptors: Ambitious, breakthrough, consequential, game-changing, illuminating, innovative, original, outstanding, remarkable, significant. |  |