About this Assessment

Theses and dissertations reflect the analytic and writing abilities developed in a graduate program. The literature review, in particular, should describe the relevance of the problem or hypothesis of a given research project, establish the project in the context of the field, and demonstrate the student’s knowledge of the literature in the field. Preparing students to analyze and synthesize research in a field of specialization is crucial to success in a given field. A substantive and thorough literature review is a pre-condition for doing substantive and thorough research. A thesis or dissertation literature review indicates a candidate’s ability to locate and evaluate scholarly information and to synthesize research in his or her field.

Concerning faculty evaluation of theses and dissertations, the role of the examiner is to judge whether the student has mastered appropriate skills. The goal of a rubric is to enable faculty to use more objective standards for one of the outcomes of graduate training—the thesis or dissertation literature review—and use those standards in a formative way to improve graduate education and training, make it more transparent to students, and help them achieve to higher levels. Remember, the literature review is not an indication of the quality of the thesis or dissertation as a whole, nor is it indicative of the quality of the research.

How to Use this Rubric

A rubric allows multiple evaluators to more objectively assess a product. This rubric should allow an assessor to evaluate different formats of theses or dissertations: the traditional, five-chapter format, as well as the compilation of research articles format. A thesis or dissertation in any format should demonstrate that the author thoroughly understands the literature in his or her area of specialty.

To use the rubric, for each row category (1–4), choose the statements that BEST describe what the student has written. Please do not select statements across the expectation spectrum columns. Please circle, highlight, OR use font color so your choices are clearly delineated.

Sources:

## Literature Review Scoring Rubric

**Comparative and Experimental Medicine, University of Tennessee**

For each row (components 1–4), choose the category that BEST describes what the student has written. Please do not select statements across the expectation spectrum columns. You may circle, highlight, OR use font color, as long as your choices are clearly delineated.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Component</th>
<th>Below expectations</th>
<th>Meets expectations</th>
<th>Exceeds expectations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Establishing the problem/hypothesis (10%)</strong></td>
<td>• Shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the problem • Does not state rationale for the project • Does not explain project’s contribution to the field</td>
<td>• Defines problem/hypothesis • States only obvious rationale for the project • Explains project’s basic contribution to the field</td>
<td>• Defines problem/hypothesis with some depth • States rationale for the project • Provides explanation of project beyond basic contribution to the field</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Relevance and context (30%)</strong></td>
<td>• Does not explain project’s relevance • Does not place the project into context of the literature • Does not set the context for the problem/hypothesis</td>
<td>• Shows limited understanding of project’s relevance • Displays some perspective of project’s context • Sets a basic context for the problem/hypothesis</td>
<td>• Shows capable understanding of project’s relevance • Makes some associations of the literature with project’s context • Places the problem/hypothesis in context beyond basic level</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Knowledge of the field/sources (30%)</strong></td>
<td>• Lacks a basic knowledge of the field • Selected sources irrelevant to project • Does not discriminate among seminal sources • Misinterprets sources</td>
<td>• Demonstrates a basic knowledge of the field • Selected sources relevant to project • Limited discrimination among seminal sources</td>
<td>• Demonstrates proficient knowledge of the field • Thorough selection of sources pertinent to project • Shows some discrimination among seminal sources</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Writing (30%)</strong></td>
<td>• Writing is confusing • Structure is disorganized • Many grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors</td>
<td>• Adequate writing quality • Organized but tends to discuss papers in succession • Several grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors</td>
<td>• Is well written and coherently organized • Few grammatical, punctuation, and/or spelling errors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Student Name:** ____________________________________________________________

**Degree Sought:** _____________________________

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### Notes
- You may circle, highlight, OR use font color, as long as your choices are clearly delineated.
- Please do not select statements across the expectation spectrum columns.