



Benchmarks Rubric: Criteria and Standards for Benchmarks

Year 1: Literature Review

Semester	Benchmark	Criterion	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Below Standard
Summer, Y1	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 1: Problem Statement</p> <p><i>The problem statement defines the issue that exists in the literature, theory, or practice that leads to a need for the study.</i></p>	Definition of the Problem	<p>The problem is thoroughly examined and content shows an in-depth understanding of the problem.</p> <p>The problem is defined using multiple perspectives to explore the complexities of the problem.</p> <p>The problem statement challenges own perceptions and beliefs</p>	<p>The problem is examined but content shows limited understanding of the problem.</p> <p>The problem is defined using a limited perspective and the problem is superficially explored.</p>	<p>The problem is vague and limited in scope.</p> <p>The problem is defined solely on own personal opinion or experiences.</p>
Summer, Y1	<p style="text-align: center;">Chapter 1: Background of the Problem</p> <p><i>The background section contains a summary of the most relevant literature to provide the historical, social, and theoretical contexts for the research problem.</i></p>	Development and Support of the Problem	<p>Evidence is compelling and strongly supports ideas.</p> <p>The breadth and depth of information are accurate, representative, and current.</p> <p>Insights and observations are</p>	<p>Evidence may be sufficient, but ideas are not well supported.</p> <p>Information may have substance but requires further elaboration or clarification.</p>	<p>Evidence is lacking, not valid, and/or not credible.</p> <p>Information is unsubstantiated.</p>

			perceptive, creative, and interesting.		
Fall, Y1	<p>Chapter 1: Purpose</p> <p><i>The purpose statement clearly and succinctly states the rationale for the study and must include two elements: the gaps in the literature that the study seeks to fill, and the social justice issue(s) that the study will address.</i></p>	Rationale for Study	<p>The study is clearly and directly linked to the problem statement.</p> <p>The study addresses an important gap in the existing literature on the topic.</p>	<p>The study is indirectly linked to the problem statement.</p> <p>The study addresses minor gaps in the existing literature on the topic.</p>	<p>The study is vaguely related or unrelated to the problem statement.</p> <p>The study does not make any original contributions to the literature.</p>
		Integration of Program Theme (Social Justice)	Social justice issues are woven into the rationale for the study.	Social justice issues are mentioned but are not directly related to the rationale for the study.	Social justice is not mentioned in the study rationale.
Fall, Y1	<p>Chapter 1: Nature of the Study</p> <p><i>This section provides a brief overview of the setting in which the research will take place and the research design selected to study the research topic.</i></p>	Selection of and Access to Setting	<p>Setting is appropriate for the research study.</p> <p>Candidate has access to setting.</p>	<p>Setting is appropriate for the research study.</p> <p>Candidate does not have current access to setting, but access feasible.</p>	<p>Setting is not appropriate for the research study.</p> <p>Candidate does not have access to setting, and access is not feasible.</p>
Fall and Spring, Y1	<p>Chapter 2: Literature Review</p> <p><i>The literature review is the argument for the significance of the study. It communicates what has been examined</i></p>	Selection and synthesis of sources	Sources are predominantly from peer-reviewed publications and primary source books. Minimal use of internet sources and secondary sources is achieved.	Sources include some peer-reviewed publications and/or book chapters, but numerous citations of non-scholarly work are present.	Sources do not include peer-reviewed publications and/or book chapters.

<p><i>on the topic, what has not been examined or how understanding on the topic is still developing, and how this study can specifically address gaps in the existing literature. It also grounds the proposed study in the relevant work that has been done in the field, to give a clear sense of the theoretical approach to the phenomena for the proposed study.</i></p>		Literature is synthesized effectively, with thorough analysis and critique of sources and smooth transitions throughout.	Literature is summarized, with some analyses and critique largely mirroring the source authors' words. Transitions are choppy.	Literature is presented as a series of unconnected abstracts.
	Integration of Data	Data and results of existing literature are clearly presented and well-integrated into sentences. Examples, explanations, and descriptions accurately clarify and support the point(s).	Data and results presented are limited and/or "plopped into" sentences. Interpretations of examples, explanations, and descriptions may be unclear.	Data presented are vague and/or poorly integrated into sentences. Data are unsupported and/or incorrect.
	Quality of Argument	Arguments are explored in-depth using examples, data, and/or references that challenge one's own perspectives and beliefs. Reasoning is logically compelling, consistent, and highly persuasive.	Arguments are general explorations using limited examples, data, and/or references that somewhat challenge one's own perspectives and beliefs. Reasoning is questionable and/or inadequate at times.	Arguments are superficially explored and examples, data, and/or reference support a bias in perspectives and beliefs. Reasoning is illogical and/or inconsistent.
	Organizational Structure of Paper	Demonstrates knowledge of APA style.	Demonstrates some knowledge of APA style.	Demonstrates little knowledge of APA style.

			Exhibits clear, logical, creative expression, and well-crafted sentences are consistent. Paragraphs are coherent and consistent with the ideas being presented.	Most ideas are clearly expressed. Paragraphs are generally coherent, but noticeable and distracting errors interfere with content.	Ideas and points are difficult to comprehend. Paragraphs are poorly organized or unfocused and ideas and points are difficult to comprehend. Numerous errors throughout the paper.
Spring, Y1	Chapter 1: Development of Research Questions <i>The proposed research question(s) should be derived from the problem and purpose statements.</i>	Formulation of Research Questions	Research questions are well-developed and have well-defined variables.	Research questions are related to research plan but have vague or poorly defined variables.	Research questions are poorly developed and are not clearly related to research plan.
Spring, Y1	Chapter 2: Conceptual Framework <i>The conceptual framework should provide the reader with a direct connection to the concepts and theories that will effectively guide the study.</i>	Coherence of Conceptual Framework	Conceptual framework is fully cohesive, all parts logically relate to each other, and the framework provides a strong basis for research investigation. Conceptual framework is evidence-based (e.g., clearly relates to existing literature and/or theory).	Conceptual framework is mostly cohesive but may include one or two elements that are not clearly related to the whole. Conceptual framework makes only a passing reference to previous literature and/or theory.	Conceptual framework is non-cohesive and does not provide a basis for research investigation. Conceptual framework makes no reference to previous literature and/or theory.

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Year 2: Proposal

Semester	Benchmark	Criterion	Meets Standard	Approaching Standard	Below Standard
Summer, Y2	<p>Chapter 1: Problem Statement</p> <p><i>The problem statement defines the issue that exists in the literature, theory, or practice that leads to a need for the study.</i></p>	Refinement of the Problem	<p>The problem is thoroughly examined and content shows an in-depth understanding of the problem.</p> <p>The problem is defined using multiple perspectives to explore the complexities of the problem.</p> <p>The problem statement challenges own perceptions and beliefs.</p>	(Since this is a refinement of the problem statement, the student should not be able to continue if the problem statement does not meet standard)	
Summer, Y2	<p>Chapter 1: Nature of the Study</p> <p><i>This section provides a brief overview of the setting in which the research will take place and the research design selected to study the research topic.</i></p>	Overview of the Research Design	<p>Clearly discusses the methodological approach that would provide answers for the stated research question(s)</p> <p>Provides ideas for the content and structure of the data collection</p> <p>Provides preliminary ideas as to how, through data collection, each</p>	<p>Discusses the methodological approach with some ideas for the content and structure of the data collection</p> <p>Does not provide preliminary ideas about how each question will be answered</p>	<p>The connection of the methodological approach to the stated research question(s) is unclear</p> <p>Does not provide preliminary ideas about the structure of the data collection nor how each question will be answered</p>

			question will be answered		
Summer, Y2	Chapter 1: Significance <i>The significance of the study includes a brief description of how/why the study is important.</i>	Argument for the Value of the Study	The contribution that the study makes to the knowledge base is clearly stated and is well supported by the literature.	The contribution that the study makes to the knowledge base is vaguely stated. A statement is made to show some support in the literature.	The contribution that the study makes to the knowledge base is unclear. There is no statement made to show support in the literature.
Summer, Y2	Chapter 1: Research Questions <i>The proposed research question(s) should be derived from the problem and purpose statements.</i>	Refinement of Research Questions	Research questions are well-developed and have well-defined variables	(Since this is a refinement of the research questions, the student should not be able to continue if the development of the research questions does not meet standard)	
Summer, Y2	Chapter 1: Definitions <i>Terms pertinent to the study should be clearly defined and supported by the literature.</i>	Definition of Key Terminology	Key terminology is precisely defined, with minimal use of jargon.	Key terminology is defined, with some overuse of jargon.	Key terminology is not defined.
Fall, Y2	Chapter 3: Research Design	Effectiveness of and Rationale for Research Design <i>The rationale for why the design is most appropriate for the study addresses what is</i>	The design proposes to yield a variety of appropriate data that supports a dynamic investigation of various aspects of the issue. Reasoning is logically	The design proposes to yield some data to support an investigation of the issue in general ways. Reasoning is questionable and/or	The design does not address all significant areas of the issue well. Reasoning is illogical

		<i>the purpose of the design, when is it used, and why is it the most appropriate choice for the present study.</i>	compelling, consistent, and highly persuasive.	inadequate at times.	and/or inconsistent.
		<p style="text-align: center;">Sample</p> <p><i>The sample is the group of research participants. The population from which the sample is drawn, the sample size, the type of sample, the sampling procedures (e.g. convenience sampling, etc.), and the sample characteristics should be explained.</i></p>	<p>The population, sample size, type of sample, sampling procedures, and sample characteristics are fully explained.</p> <p>The sample size and needed sample size for the chosen research design and analysis is specific.</p> <p>A description of the demographic information is included.</p> <p>In-depth discussion of how the sample is identified, who selected the sample, and how the study was introduced to the sample</p>	<p>The population, sample size, type of sample, sampling procedures, and sample characteristics are explained in general terms.</p> <p>Demographic information is included</p> <p>Specifics of how the sample is identified, who selected the sample, and how the study was introduced are not present.</p>	<p>The population, sample size, type of sampling procedures, and sample characteristics are vague with no specific mention of demographic information nor of how the sample is identified.</p>
Fall, Y2	Chapter 3: Research Design	<p>Description of Setting</p> <p><i>The setting is the location where the research takes place.</i></p>	Setting in which the research takes place is clearly described. Any special features of the setting pertaining to	Setting in which the research takes place is briefly mentioned but not sufficiently described.	Setting is not mentioned.

			generalizability (e.g., Title I school; parochial Catholic school) are noted.		
		Instrumentation <i>The instrument(s) used to measure each variable should be identified. The instruments may be tests, surveys, questionnaires, observational protocols, or other measurements.</i>	Instruments that are used are clearly identified. Each instrument is described including its content, origin, and appropriateness. Scoring information is included if applicable. Reliability and validity are discussed.	Instruments that are used are identified but the description is missing some of the content, origin, or appropriateness. Reliability and validity are mentioned cursorily.	Instruments that are used are identified but are missing content, origin, or appropriateness and scoring information is not included when applicable. Reliability and validity are not mentioned.
		Data Collection Procedures <i>The procedural details necessary to replicate the study are provided.</i>	Details necessary to replicate the study are specific. Procedures are described in a chronological, step-by-step format.	Details necessary to replicate the study are included but not in detail. Procedures are not identified chronologically.	Details necessary to replicate the study are unclear. Procedures are not identified.
Spring, Y2	Chapter 3: Research Design	Method(s) of Data Analysis <i>The type of data analysis is identified and a concise rationale for the type of analysis is provided.</i>	The type of data analysis is identified and a concise rationale for the type of analysis is provided. The statistical procedures are consistent with the research questions, hypotheses, and type of data collected. The	The type of data analysis is identified with a rationale for the type of analysis proposed. The statistical procedures are not all consistent with the research questions. Each hypothesis does not have a proposed	The type of data analysis is identified with no rationale for the type of proposed analysis. Statistical procedures are not consistent with the research questions.

			statistical procedure for each hypothesis is discussed.	statistical procedure.	
		<p>Limitations</p> <p><i>This involves a discussion of the study limitations in context of the threats to internal or external validity, as well as steps taken to limit the threat and how the limitation influenced the study.</i></p>	The discussion of the limitations of the study is in the context of threats to internal or external validity. Steps are taken to limit the threats and how the limitations influenced the study.	The discussion of the limitations of the study does not include threats to either internal or external validity. Proposed steps to limit the threats are unclear.	The discussion of the limitations of the study is vague and does not include threats to internal or external validity.
Spring, Y2	<p>Proposal Defense</p> <p><i>A 30 minute presentation that highlights the key points of the proposal is followed by questions from the committee.</i></p>	Proposal Document	Proposal final draft complete. Dissertation chair has given approval to defend.	Proposal final draft is not complete and approval to defend has not been granted.	
		Proposal Presentation	<p>Thirty-minute presentation is ready.</p> <p>Committee members' questions are answered clearly and accurately.</p>	<p>Thirty-minute presentation is ready.</p> <p>Some difficulty responding to committee members' questions.</p>	<p>Presentation is not ready.</p> <p>Committee members' questions are not answered.</p>
Spring, Y2	<p>University and Setting Permissions Sought</p> <p><i>Permission to conduct the study is sought from the University's Human</i></p>	Submission of Human Subjects Application (HSA)	<p>The HSA is submitted within the required time frame.</p> <p>The HSA is complete with no missing information required for</p>	The HSA is not submitted within the required time frame but is missing some required information based on the nature of the study.	The HSA is incomplete. It does not contain required information based on the nature of the study.

	<i>Subjects Committee as well as the representative or office that oversees research for the setting in which the dissertation research will take place.</i>		the nature of the study.		
		Submission of District Research/setting application.	The District Research application is submitted within the required time frame. The application is complete with no missing information required for the nature of the study.	The District Research application is not submitted within the required time frame but is missing some required information based on the nature of the study.	The application is incomplete. It does not contain required information based on the nature of the study.
Spring, Y2	University and Setting Permissions Obtained	Human Subjects Committee approval	Approval is granted.	N/A	N/A
	<i>Human Subjects Committee and setting approve study.</i>	District Research/setting approval	Approval is granted.	N/A	N/A

Year 3: Dissertation

Semester	Benchmark	Criterion	Meets Standard	Does Not Meet Standard
Summer, Y3	Data Collection <i>Data are collected in accordance with the research procedures described in the Method.</i>	Data collection	Data are collected and stored in accordance with the AERA Ethical Code of Conduct and in a manner approved by HSC and appropriate workplace approval body. The data are organized for analysis in an appropriate format/database.	Data collection is incomplete and/or does not reflect the characteristics required to meet this standard.
Summer, Y3	Chapter 4: Results <i>Data are analyzed and findings are presented accurately and appropriately.</i>	Data analysis Presentation of results	Data presentation is thorough, clear, and concise. Data interpretations are well presented, reasonable, and accurate. Data presentation is used to further explore the issue and to build a rationale for the findings and recommendations. Quantitative data (if applicable) are analyzed with the appropriate descriptive statistics and inferential statistics, presented in the order in which the research questions and hypotheses were stated. Qualitative data (if applicable) are analyzed with the appropriate methods and illustrate the themes that emerged from the research. Data obtained from mixed	Data presentation is incomplete or imprecise. Methods and evidence are inconsistent. Data presentations stand alone as separate pieces that do not form a coherent exploration of the issue or provide a basis for findings. A summary of the findings is missing or incomplete.

			methods (if applicable) are compared, contrasted, and synthesized. Tables and/or figures complement the data presented in the chapter.	
Fall, Y3	<p>Chapter 5: Discussion</p> <p><i>Findings are interpreted, contextualized, and discussed in terms of their implications for practice and research.</i></p>	<p>Interpretation of findings</p> <p>Implications for practice</p> <p>Recommendations for further study</p> <p>Conclusions</p>	Data interpretations are well presented, reasonable, and accurate. Conclusions and recommendations are clearly derived from the data analyses. Recommendations include implications for practice and recommendations for further study. The significance of the study is assessed and explored.	Data interpretation is incomplete or imprecise based on the data presentation. Conclusions and recommendations are present although it may be difficult to follow the logic of how these flow from the data analysis. One or more of the following recommendations are missing: implications for practice, recommendations for action, and/or recommendations for further study.
Spring, Y3	<p>Dissertation Defense</p> <p><i>The defense is a presentation of a student's research findings and conclusions to the dissertation committee for review, comment, and eventual approval. It is also an opportunity for the greater University community to learn about the significance of the research findings.</i></p>	Final revision of Chapters 1-3	Final revisions are made to Chapters 1-3 to reflect analysis and conclusions of Chapter 4 and 5.	Final revisions in Chapters 1-3 partially reflect or do not reflect the analysis and conclusions of Chapters 4 and 5.
		APA Style and Format	Language, conventions, and format model those used in scholarly and professional literature. The writing is clear, concise, and grammatically and structurally correct. The dissertation generally meets the guidelines for a professional publication. APA format is	Mostly follows APA style with minor errors in citations or format. Some imprecise language is present. Some editing errors detract from the work.

			followed rigorously. References include all sources cited in the text. Appendices include supplementary or illustrative materials, or explanatory data too lengthy to include in the text.	
		Dissertation Defense Presentation Preparation	Dissertation final draft complete. Dissertation chair has given approval to defend. Thirty-minute presentation is ready.	Dissertation final draft is not complete and approval to defend has not been granted.