

Walden University

Master's Thesis Rubric

Empirical (Data Collection) Qualitative Studies

Version 1.2 (8/1/05)

Instructions

The purpose of the rubric is to guide students and thesis supervisory committees as they work together to develop high quality theses. The use of the rubric is intended to provide on-going and flexible evaluation and re-evaluation of the thesis drafts as they are developed.

Quality indicators are specified in the rubric for each chapter of the thesis. The sub-sections for each chapter are made up of descriptions of substantive characteristics of the thesis, specifically related to the scholarly quality and integrity of the document. A numerical rating scale is associated with each sub-category of thesis quality indicators.

In the writing process, use the rubric as a suggested outline for the thesis, and as a basis for feedback on early drafts. As the thesis is developed and submitted for review to the thesis supervisory committee, each committee member (chairperson and additional committee member) should use the version of the thesis rubric selected by the committee to communicate his or her evaluations to the student, the chairperson, and the other members of the committee. This process of on-going evaluation and communication will continue throughout the development of the thesis.

Before the thesis oral, each member of the committee should complete the rubric and submit it to the committee chairperson. If there are significant differences of opinion within the committee, the chair can schedule a conference call to reach consensus.

The chair should complete a consensus version of the rubric, which reflects the shared evaluation of the committee. The consensus rubric should be submitted to thesis@waldenu.edu along with a copy of the proposal itself. The rubric should also be shared with the student as part of the committee's feedback.

About consensus: For the final copy of the thesis, there must be unanimous agreement by the committee before the student proceeds to the oral defense (although revisions may be required following the oral).

About research methodology: The rubric has been developed for use with studies employing qualitative, quantitative, and mixed research designs and can be used for evaluating both types of theses (either the Empirical (Data Collection) Thesis or the Critical Literature Review with Proposed Research Design). Students should develop a working knowledge of the overall rubric, reflecting their understanding of diverse research designs.

Using the rating scale: A five level rating scale is used for scoring each of the quality indicators in the rubric. In general, ratings of 3 or above are considered satisfactory (further revision may be needed), while ratings of 1 or 2 do not achieve minimal standards for passing. An "NA" (Not Applicable) category is also used when an indicator on the rubric is not relevant to the manuscript.

A space for comments is provided for each sub-group of quality indicators in each chapter. This space can be used to provide specific guidance for revision, and it should also be used to praise strong work or noteworthy improvements. More extensive notes can be submitted as a separate attachment or as a marked-up copy of the manuscript.

Submit completed rubric to: thesis@waldenu.edu

Student and Committee Information

Chair: Complete all the shaded fields in this section before submitting the rubric. Be sure to include the names of all members of the committee.

Date: (click here and type today's date →)

Student's Name:

(Last, First) -- (click here and type student's name →)

Student ID (for office use only) --

School: (click here and pull down to select school name →)

Committee Members' Names:

Chairperson

Member

Member (if applicable)

School Representative (if applicable)

Other (if applicable)

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Summative Evaluation (for Consensus Rubrics)

Chair: Complete the shaded fields in this section before submitting the consensus rubric.

Committee's Summative Evaluation of State of the Thesis:

4=Accepted as presented.

3=Accepted, but requires minor revisions.

2=Not accepted and requires major revisions, but an additional oral not required.

1=Not accepted and requires major revisions, and an additional oral is required.

Evaluation: (click here →)

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Thesis Quality Indicators

Committee Member: Assign ratings using the shaded fields in this section for each relevant quality indicator for the thesis. When you complete the form, save it to your hard drive, then attach the saved version to an email addressed to the chair of the committee.

Chair: Use the individual rubrics submitted by the committee to develop a set of consensus ratings. Complete the shaded fields in this section with the consensus ratings for each quality indicator. When the committee is in agreement on the consensus ratings, submit the rubric as an email attachment to assessment@waldenu.edu.

Definitions of Ratings for Thesis Quality Indicators

5 = Approved with commendation, the level of scholarship is exceptional in this section of the quality indicators.

4 = Acceptable as written, all crucial elements are included and adequately described.

3 = Approved, although revisions are strongly suggested in one or more important component(s) that are of markedly lesser quality than the rest of the quality indicators in this section. Comments on how to enhance quality are provided for action in the thesis draft before the oral.

2 = Must be revised and resubmitted because one or more essential component(s) are not satisfactorily described.

1 = Must be revised and resubmitted because one or more required element(s) are missing or previous requests for revision were ignored.

NA = Not Applicable. This quality indicator does not apply to the document.

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<p style="text-align: center;">Thesis Chapter 1 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating <i>(Click here ↓)</i></p>
<p>1. Abstract</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. Abstract contains a concise description of the study, a brief statement of the problem, exposition of methods and procedures, summary of findings, and implications for social change.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>2. The Introduction section has a clear statement demonstrating that the focus of the study is on a significant problem that is worthy of study. There is a brief, well-articulated summary of research literature that substantiates the study, with references to more detailed discussions in Chapter 2.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>3. The Problem Statement concisely states what will be studied by describing at least two factors and a conjectured relationship among them that leads to an identified problem.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>4. The Nature of the Study, Specific Research Questions, Hypotheses, or Research Objectives (as appropriate for the study) are briefly and clearly described. Reference is made to more detailed discussions in Chapter 3. If this is a critical literature review, the goals of the review are briefly described here.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>5. The Purpose of the study is described in a logical, explicit manner.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>6. In quantitative studies the theoretical base or in qualitative studies the conceptual framework shows which ideas from the literature ground the research being conducted.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>7. Operational Definitions of technical terms, jargon, or special word uses are provided.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>8. Assumptions, Limitations, Scope and Delimitations provide descriptions of</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">a. facts assumed to be true but not actually verified,</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">b. potential limitations of the study, and</p> <p style="padding-left: 20px;">c. the scope (bounds) of the study.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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<p style="text-align: center;">Thesis Chapter 1 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating (Click here ↓)</p>
<p>9. The Significance of the Study is described in terms of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. knowledge generation, b. professional application, and c. social change. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>10. Chapter 1 ends with a Transition Statement that contains a summary of key points of the study and an overview of the content of the remaining chapters in the study.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Thesis Chapter 2 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating (Click here ↓)</p>
<p>1. There is an Introduction that describes</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the content of the review, b. the organization of the review, and c. the strategy used for searching the literature. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>2. The review of related research and literature is clearly related to the problem statement as expressed in</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. research questions and hypotheses, or b. study questions and study objectives. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>3. The review of related research and literature includes the relationship of the study to previous research.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>4. The review contains concise summaries of literatures that help</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. define the most important aspects of the theory that will be examined-or tested (for quantitative studies), or b. substantiate the rationale or conceptual framework for the study (for qualitative studies). <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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<p style="text-align: center;">Thesis Chapter 2 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating (Click here ↓)</p>
<p>5. There is literature-based description of</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. the research variables (quantitative studies), or b. potential themes and perceptions to be explored (qualitative studies). <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>6. The content of the review is drawn from acceptable peer-reviewed journals or sound academic journals or there is a justification for using other sources.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>7. The review is an integrated, critical essay on the most relevant and current published knowledge on the topic. The review is organized around major ideas or themes.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

<p style="text-align: center;">Thesis Chapter 3 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Rating (Click here ↓)</p>
<p>1. Introduction describes how the research design derives logically from the problem or issue statement.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>2. Design describes which qualitative paradigm will be used (case study, phenomenology, grounded theory, feminist, narrative, etc.). The choice of paradigm is justified, with explanations why other likely choices would be less effective.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>3. The Role of the Researcher in the data collection procedure is described.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>4. Where appropriate, questions and sub questions make sense, are answerable, are few in number, are clearly stated, and are open-ended. When it is proposed that questions will emerge from the study, initial objectives are sufficiently focused.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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<p>5. The context for the study is described and justified. Procedures for gaining access to participants are described. Methods of establishing a researcher-participant working relationship are appropriate.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>6. Measures for ethical protection of participants are adequate.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>8. Choices about which data to collect are justified. Data collected are appropriate to answer the questions posed in relation to the qualitative paradigm chosen. How and when the data are to be or were collected and recorded is described.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>9. How and when the data will be or were analyzed is articulated. Procedures for dealing with discrepant cases are described. If a software program is used in the analysis, it is clearly described. The coding procedure for reducing information into categories and themes is described.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>10. If an exploratory study will be (or was) conducted its relation to the larger study is explained.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

<p>Thesis Chapter 4 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p>Rating <i>(Click here ↓)</i></p>
<p>1. The process by which the data were generated, gathered, and recorded is clearly described.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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<p>2. The systems used for keeping track of data and emerging understandings (research logs, reflective journals, cataloging systems) are clearly described.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>3. The experience of the researcher in the topic is presented in a way that the reader can understand any biases that may be operating; the procedure used to bracket experience is indicated.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>4. The findings</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. build logically from the problem and the research design, and b. are presented in a manner that addresses the research questions. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>5. Discrepant cases and nonconfirming data are included in the findings.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>6. Patterns, relationships, and themes described as findings are supported by the data. All salient data are accounted for in the findings.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>7. A discussion on Evidence of Quality shows how this study followed procedures to assure accuracy of the data (e.g., trustworthiness, member checks, triangulation, etc.). Appropriate evidence occurs in the appendixes (sample transcripts, researcher logs, field notes, etc.). (May appear in Chapter 5)</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

<p>Thesis Chapter 5 Empirical (Data Collection) Study: Qualitative Quality Indicators</p>	<p>Rating <i>(Click here ↓)</i></p>
<p>1. The chapter 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.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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<p>2. The Interpretation of Findings</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. includes conclusions that address all of the research questions, b. contains references to outcomes in Chapter 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. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>3. The Implications for Social Change are clearly grounded in the significance section of Chapter 1 and outcomes presented in Chapter 4.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>4. Recommendations for Action:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. should flow logically from the conclusions and contain steps to useful action, b. state who needs to pay attention to the results, and c. indicate how the results might be disseminated. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>5. Recommendations for Further Study point to topics that need closer examination and may generate a new round of questions.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>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.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>7. The work closes with a strong concluding statement making the “take-home message” clear to the reader.</p> <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	
<p>8. The thesis</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a. follows a standard form and has a professional, scholarly appearance, b. is written with correct grammar, punctuation, and spelling, c. includes citations for the following: direct quotations, paraphrasing, facts, and references to research studies, d. does not have over-reliance on limited sources, and e. in-text citations are found in the reference list. <p>Comments: (click here→)</p>	

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General Comments

Comments on the following indicators of quality apply to the manuscript as a whole.

Writing Style and Composition

The thesis 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.

Comments: (click here→)

Organization and Form

The thesis is logically and comprehensively organized. The chapters add up to an integrated "whole." Subheadings are used to identify the logic and movement of the thesis, and transitions between chapters are smooth and coherent.

Comments: (click here→)

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