

# THESIS DEFENSE RUBRIC

Student: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Defense: \_\_\_\_\_

Thesis Title: \_\_\_\_\_

Committee Member: \_\_\_\_\_

**Instructions for Thesis Committee Members:**

Each committee member should complete the thesis section before the defense and the oral defense section immediately after the defense. The committee chair will average the results followed by discussion and a pass/fail determination.

For the rubric, complete both sections below by marking an (x) in the appropriate box for each rubric line. The chair will summarize the rubric scores on form 2252 Thesis Defense Report.

**Instructions for Thesis Committee Chair:**

For each rubric row (i.e. Organization Rubric, Presentation Rubric, etc.),

1. Assign a numeric score, listed at the top of the column, depending on the committee member’s choice (i.e., Excellent = 4, Very Good = 3, etc.).
2. Total the scores from each committee member’s rubric form for that rubric row, then average them. E.g. Committee Member A scored a 4, Member B scored a 3, Member C scored a 4, so their total is 11 and the average is 3.67.
3. Record this average score on the Thesis Defense Report form in the appropriate “Score by area” cell.

**Oral Defense:**

|   | Excellent (4)   | Very Good (3)  | Satisfactory (2)   | Unsatisfactory (1)  |
|---|---|--|--|---|
| <b>Organization Rubric</b>                    | Very logical, coherent, complete  | Generally logical, mostly coherent, generally complete   | A bit scattered but acceptable, somewhat coherent, occasionally scrambled, some noticeable omissions but still understandable  | Rather hard to follow, significant omissions and/or substitutions   |
| <b>Score:</b>                                 |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Presentation Rubric</b>                    | Clear, precise, convincing, articulate, good audience connection  | Mostly clear, good grasp of material, only occasional stumbles, minor uncertainty on some facts or details   | Occasional confusion or lack of clarity, occasional gaps in theory or important details, somewhat nervous or jittery   | A lot of confusion, not in control of facts and key details, very nervous and stiff, frequently at a loss for words   |
| <b>Score:</b>                                 |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Public Q&amp;A Rubric</b>                  | Quickly grasped questions, clear and apt responses, good control of both theory and findings  | Occasionally misunderstood a question, responses usually good though occasionally vague, generally apt grasp of question and how to answer                                 | Some misunderstanding of questions, responses may be vague or inaccurate, did not always give a full response, may answer a different question                         | Frequently misunderstood a question, incorrect or inadequate responses, lack of confidence in response, argumentative   |
| <b>Score:</b>                                 |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Interaction with material Rubric</b>       | Clearly understood both research findings and underlying theory, could aptly contextualize or interpret findings in light of theory, when appropriate may have suggested how theory might be extended based on research results | Adequate understanding of research findings, generally understood underlying theory, perhaps a bit reluctant to attempt to extend theory or explain contradictory findings | Weak but acceptable understanding of theory, could present research findings but not always clear on implications, occasionally confused details or important findings | Lacked adequate understanding of theory, research findings not always understood, confused or uncertain about the implications of findings, contradictions or confusion evident in how material handled |
| <b>Score:</b>                                 |   |  |  |   |
| <b>Response to Committee questions Rubric</b> | Quickly grasped questions, clear and apt responses, good control of both theory and findings  | Occasionally misunderstood a question, responses usually good though occasionally vague, generally apt grasp of question and how to answer                                 | Some misunderstanding of questions, responses may be vague or inaccurate, did not always give a full response, may answer a different question                         | Frequently misunderstood a question, incorrect or inadequate responses, lack of confidence in response, argumentative   |
| <b>Score:</b>                                 |   |  |  |   |

**Thesis:**

|                                  | <b>Excellent (4)</b>  | <b>Above Average (3)</b>  | <b>Satisfactory (2)</b>  | <b>Unsatisfactory (1)</b>   |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Research Statement Rubric</b> | Well-grounded, properly contextualized, clearly and convincingly presented  | Theoretical motivation visible, context provided, reasonable presentation   | Theoretical motivation could be stronger, presentation okay but could be better, research question(s) could be stronger  | Theoretical grounding weak, missing, or confused, not clear what the research question is, presentation and argumentation hard to follow  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Literature Review Rubric</b>  | Broad-ranging, well-organized, provides a strong foundation for the research being presented  | Very adequate, used effectively to introduce the research question at hand  | Major sources included but some visible gaps, utilization of sources could be stronger but is acceptable, organization is okay   | Significant gaps in the literature review, not effectively used in support of research question, organizing principles unclear  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Methodology Rubric</b>        | Clearly explained, very appropriate, properly applied   | Explained, mostly appropriate, generally proper application, overall—only a few shaky areas   | Explained but not always clearly, generally appropriate though they are some weaknesses, application could be improved   | Inadequate explanation, some choices suspect or inappropriate, methodology not always applied as described  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Research Results Rubric</b>   | Consistent with methodology, well organized and presented, gaps or problems acknowledged  | Mostly consistent with methodology, adequately organized and presented, gaps or problems may be glossed over                                | Generally consistent with methodology, some problems in presentation of findings, gaps or problems may not have been acknowledged  | Data may not be consistent with methodology, presentation is adequate or confusing, gaps or problems ignored or covered up  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Analysis Rubric</b>           | Optimal analytic strategies applied, analytic results well presented and explained, proper interpretation of analytic results       | Good analytic strategies applied, results adequately presented, interpretation mostly consistent with approach to analysis                  | Analytic strategies acceptable though not optimal, presentation of results okay but with obvious gaps, interpretation acceptable but weak at points  | Analytic strategies marginal or inappropriate, presentation of findings inadequate, confused or misleading, interpretation of findings too often misguided or misleading  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Organization</b>              | Clear, logical, convincing, strong  | Generally clear, logical, convincing  | Okay though there is room for improvement, some sections may be misplaced, possible gaps in lists of tables and figures  | Too much redundancy, sections misplaced or missing, inadequate notational system for showing structure and number tables and figures  |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Writing Style</b>             | Clear, easy to follow, proper use of technical terms, sentence structure not overly adomed, good paragraphing, not dense or cryptic | Very readable though sentence and paragraph structures may be longer and more complex than necessary, technical terms mostly used correctly | Generally readable but occasionally hard to follow, occasional miss-use of technical terms, some redundancy, some tendency to include sentence and paragraph structures which are dense, confusing, and overly-adomed. Some non-academic jargon may be present | Miss-sue of technical terms is common, writing is dense, confusing or misleading, too much redundancy, non-academic style (use of contractions, inclusion of folksy vocabulary, tortured sentence structure, poor paragraphing, etc.) |
| <b>Score:</b>                    |   |   |  |   |
| <b>Content</b>                   | Coherent, original, creative, well-presented, valuable contribution to the field, valuable academic contribution                    | Content consistent with theory and methodology, well-done but nothing out of the ordinary, consistent with expectations for an MA thesis    | Content okay, suitable organization, acceptable MA-level work  | Not MA-level work, amateurish in tone and manner of presentation, adds little or nothing to the field   |
| <b>Score</b>                     |   |   |  |   |