

PhD Defense Rubric

This rubric is to be implemented on the day of the PhD defense. Record all committee member votes on the corresponding Google form. Consider the dissertation document and the oral portion of the defense when evaluating this rubric.

Criteria	Does Not Pass Exam	Passes Exam	
	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory	Exemplary
Research Goal and Objectives	Research goal is not clearly stated and not organized into well-defined objectives and outcomes.	Research goal is clearly stated and organized into well-defined objectives.	Research goal is clearly stated and organized into objectives with well-defined outcomes.
Literature Review	Disorganized and too brief review; widely known references are missing or not germane to the topic at hand.	Logically crafted review that adequately explores the topic; some references known to experts may be missing.	Well-synthesized exploration of the topic and illustration of the state of the knowledge in the field; references are complete.
Ability to Demonstrate a Creative and Sound Solution to the Problem	Work is not based on sound science and engineering principles, and not creative; lack of awareness of assumptions.	Work is based on sound science and engineering principles but derivative/incremental; major assumptions are stated.	Work is based on sound science and engineering principles and creative; assumptions are clearly stated.
Results and Conclusions	Conclusions do not flow logically from analysis performed; novelty, significance, and impact of work is minimal; does not propose future research questions.	Conclusions flow logically from analysis performed; novelty, significance, and impact of work is satisfactory; propose future research questions.	Conclusions flow logically from analysis performed; novelty, significance, and impact of work is expertly conveyed; clearly and convincingly propose future research questions.
Quality of Written Communication	Writing style is laborious to read with several errors, poor sentence construction and/or poor document structuring.	Writing style is academic and presents information in a concise organized manner; minor grammatical and spelling errors.	Writing style is scholarly, precise, and flows naturally; voice is active and devoid of bias; no grammatical or spelling errors.
Quality of Oral Communication	Disorganized and low-quality presentation; poor communication skills; answers show lack of knowledge and poor critical thinking skills.	Adequately organized presentation; good communication skills; answers show adequate knowledge and critical thinking skills.	Highly engaging conference quality presentation; excellent communication skills; answers show expertise and well-developed critical thinking.