

School of Education
Guide for the Ph.D. Research Preliminary Exam
Qualitative Rubric

Purpose

The purpose and function of the research preliminary exam is to assess a student’s ability to conceptualize, design, and articulate the critical dimensions of designing original research. After the student has completed 15 credits of their core research coursework, as agreed upon by their advisor and committee, the student will work independently (open book, open notes) over a 5 week period to complete the preliminary exam

How to use This Outline

The following outline is not intended to represent every possible research method or study design component. Rather, the reader should use the outline as a general guide in structuring the preliminary exam content using the major headings marked with an asterisk. In addition, for the major elements the evaluation rubric used by the faculty is also provided.

Outline for Preliminary exam

- I. * Introduction and Background
 - a. Context of the preliminary exam.
 - b. What does the literature suggest about the problems or tensions in this field?
 - c. What is the focus of the current literature in this field?
 - d. Is this a well studied phenomena or something that is obscure?
 - e. What parts of the problem have already been explored?
 - f. What is the researcher’s (your) perspective?

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Introduction/ description	Clearly describes purpose and realistic scope providing basis for research design; sufficiently informed by the literature; clear rationale for focus and/or approach and/or context	Describes purpose, scope lacks clarity in defining study; informed by the literature, rationale under-developed	Unclear purpose and scope of study; partially informed by the literature, rationale under-developed	Unclear, incomplete, and/or tentative basis and scope; not or poorly informed by the literature, no rationale provided	E=Excellent G= Good C=Conditional U=Unacceptable
Context/ scope	Context/scope clearly delineated; adequately supported by the literature; demonstrates knowledge of key issues and debates related to the topic; relevant studies critiqued and used to support study and researcher’s learning	Context/scope defines the study; builds upon the literature; relevant studies reviewed and summarized with relevance to study and learning elaborated	Context/scope lacks clarity and thoroughness; lacks support from the literature; fit of cited studies is questionable; connection to study and learning is unclear	Context/scope sketchy; not supported by the literature; poor choice of studies, with little relationship made to study and learning	E G C U

Researcher's perspective	Issues of social location, identity, worldview, and background are clearly discussed in relation to the focus of the inquiry, methodological approach, and theoretical/conceptual framework and grounded in the literature.	Issues of social location, identity, worldview and background are generally discussed, somewhat related to the focus of the inquiry, methodological approach, and theoretical/conceptual framework and grounded in the literature.	Issues of social location, identity, worldview and background not adequately discussed, or weakly related to the focus of the inquiry, methodological approach, and theoretical/conceptual framework but are grounded in the literature.	Issues of social location, identity, worldview and background not discussed, or weakly related to the focus of the inquiry, methodological approach, and theoretical/conceptual framework and are not grounded in the literature.	E G C U
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II. * Statement of the Problem / Purpose of the Study

- a. What is the problem you wish to investigate?
- b. How would this research add to the field of study?
- c. What is the purpose of this study?

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Problem/ study statement/Research questions	Well stated, clear and emanates from introduction and context, suitable for qualitative inquiry, grounded in theory, context-based	Adequately stated, fit with introduction and context; suitable for qualitative inquiry, lack cohesion	Statement lacks clarity and/or fit with introduction and context, but is suitable for qualitative inquiry	Difficult to ascertain focus and intent; problem is unclear or inappropriate for study	E G C U

III. * Research Questions, Focus of Inquiry (or Hypothesis, where appropriate)

IV. * Potential Limitations

V. * Conceptual/Theoretical Framework (hypothesis or theoretical grounding of phenomena to be studied)

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Conceptual/theoretical framework/model	Disciplinary, epistemological, and philosophical grounding for the study is clearly explicated, integrated, and evidences familiarity with important theoretical and empirical work; a conceptual framework is constructed, cited, or adapted from the theoretical and empirical literature. Integrates substantive and epistemological assumptions and these are compatible. Demonstrates understanding of the role of theory in qualitative work	Adequately stated theoretical framework, compatibility of epistemological and theoretical framework not clear, demonstrates understanding of the role of theory in qualitative work, no conceptual framework developed	Theoretical and conceptual frameworks are not well developed or one is missing, role of theory in the research is not clearly addressed.	No theoretical or conceptual framework, or not supported by the literature, or role of theory not addressed.	E G C U

VI. * Method (see Quantitative, Qualitative, and Mixed Design Considerations document)

Grounding of Proposed Methodology.

- a. Rationale and evidence for the selected methodological approach.
- b. Evaluation of the quality/validity of methods they propose for their project/dissertation
- c. Efficacy of proposed methodology to address research questions

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Research Design and Methodology	Describes the research paradigm including ontological and epistemological assumptions and how these shape the choice of design and methodology; ground the choice of qualitative methodology in a disciplinary tradition and/or literature, describe its purpose and dimensions; link the choice of methodology to the type of data sought and questions asked and nature of the phenomenon under investigation, design incorporates tenets of qualitative research.	Makes a strong case for overall methodology and design; lacks distinct fit with the topic; lacks precise description of methodology, integrates some literature; design incorporates tenets of qualitative research.	Makes a weak case for identified method, lacking thorough recognition of its applicability to the topic; use of the literature needs to be strengthened; design incorporates tenets of qualitative research.	Identifies the method with little or no fit to the topic; choice of literature for support is weak, is not qualitative.	E G C U

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Sampling (participants, sites, settings)	Sampling process and criteria are clearly stated and grounded in the literature (substantive and methodological), sampling processes are ethical, aligned with the research questions and conceptual or theoretical framework. Participants, sites, and settings are addressed if appropriate.	Sampling process and criteria are generally stated and grounded in the literature (substantive, methodological); are ethical, and are somewhat aligned with research questions and/or theoretical framework. Participants, sites, and settings are addressed if appropriate.	Sampling processes and criteria are generally stated and not well grounded in the literature and are ethical. There is poor alignment of sampling processes and criteria with research questions and/or theoretical framework. Participants, site, and settings are addressed if appropriate.	Sampling processes or criteria are not explained, not grounded in the literature or not ethical or no alignment of sampling and research questions and or theoretical framework or participants, site and settings are not all addressed if appropriate.	E G C U

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Data collection	Data collection methods are clearly explained and detailed, includes rationale for selection of data collection methods aligned with research questions and theoretical/or conceptual framework. Grounded in the literature and attentive to goodness criteria.	Data collection methods are generally explained, rationale for selection of methods somewhat aligned with research questions and or theoretical/conceptual framework. Grounded in the literature and attentive to goodness criteria.	Brief, superficial description of data collection methods, not adequately supported by the methodological literature. Weak description of alignment to research questions and/or theory or conceptual framework. Not attentive to goodness criteria.	Data collection methods are poorly described no discussion or rationale for the selection of data collection methods, no explanation of fit with theory or conceptual framework. Not grounded in literature. Not attentive to goodness criteria.	E G C U

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Assessment, critique of methodology (goodness)	Issues of feasibility, authenticity, credibility, and transferability are clearly discussed, grounded in the literature, integrated with the design and methodology, and aligned with theoretical underpinnings.	Issues of feasibility, authenticity, credibility, and transferability are generally addressed, grounded in the literature, and somewhat integrated with the design and methodology, and aligned with theoretical underpinnings.	Issues of feasibility, authenticity, credibility, and transferability are vague or unclear, although grounded in the literature, and in alignment with theoretical underpinnings, but not well integrated with the design and methodology.	Issues of feasibility, authenticity, credibility, and transferability are not addressed, not grounded in the literature, or not aligned with theoretical underpinnings.	E G C U

VII. * Data Analysis and Form of Results

- a. How do you intend to answer your research questions?
- b. What is the data analysis method/s to be used?
- c. What methods will be used to represent and systematically summarize data collected?
- d. Treatment, organization, and fidelity of mixed methods analysis.

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Data Analysis	Data analysis procedures are clearly explained and detailed, includes rationale for selection of approach(es) to analysis; alignment with research questions and theoretical/conceptual framework. Grounded in the literature and attentive to goodness criteria.	Data analysis procedures are generally explained, rationale for selection of approach(es) to analysis somewhat aligned with research questions and theoretical/conceptual framework. Grounded in the literature and attentive to "goodness" criteria.	Brief, superficial description of data analysis procedures, not adequately supported by methodological literature. Weak alignment with research questions and/or theory or conceptual framework. Not attentive to goodness criteria.	Data analysis procedures are poorly described, no discussion or rationale for the selection of data analysis processes, no explanation of fit with theory or conceptual framework. Not grounded in literature. Not attentive to goodness criteria.	E G C U

VIII. * Summary

- a. Synthesis of research method and design to address problem state or study focus.
- b. Summary of contribution of research to field of study.
- c. Potential publication.

IX. * References

- a. APA 5th edition editorial style.

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
References	Relevant to the topic, paradigm, method; optimal references; cited and referenced per APA	Mostly relevant to topic, paradigm, and method; adequate references; adequate use of citations per APA.	Relevant to one or two of three—topic, paradigm or method; inadequate references; some miscues in citations and references per APA; inadequate use of citations	Lack of relevance to topic, paradigm, and method; inadequate references; many miscues in citations and references per APA; plagiarism	E G C U

X. Other Considerations

Evaluation Rubric:

	Excellent	Good	Conditional	Unacceptable	Overall
Writing	Well organized, reads well, very few errors in grammar and spelling, judicious use of quotations, coherence, clarity, depth, creativity.	Organization has a few weak points, reads satisfactorily, few errors, judicious use of quotations.	Organization is lacking, difficult to read, some errors, heavy reliance on quotations.	Poorly organized, difficult to read and understand, numerous errors	E G C U
Thoroughness	All components are evident and clearly identifiable	All components are present; weakness in clarity in one or two major components.	Major components are present, some subcomponents missing or weakness in clarity in more than two major components	A major components is missing or seriously lacking in clarity, or numerous subcomponents are missing or lacking in clarity.	E G C U
Academic honesty	Reports findings of published research accurately, preliminary exam represents own writing	Reports findings of published research accurately, preliminary exam represents own writing	Preliminary exam rejected if concerns about academic honesty are raised.	Preliminary exam rejected if concerns about academic honesty are raised.	E G C U
Timeliness	Submits on time	Submits on time	Paper turned in late receive lower ratings		E G C U