

Initial Research Outline Rubric (PhD and Masters)

Criteria	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor
Introductory background and brief literature review	<p>Articulates the novel character of the topic (i.e. an area which has not yet been addressed in the literature).</p> <p>The writing represents a succinct, coherent and broadly accessible overview of the field that builds an argument through a compelling sequence of ideas. The author draws on a vast array of scholarly literature in line with discipline expectations. Citation groupings and contradictions may be presented as evidence of extensive reading.</p> <p>Presents specific trends within the field with a sophisticated description of research components (specific paradigms, methods and techniques are presented) in a relational way (purpose, methods and findings are synthesised). Unpacks and critiques some evidence. The structure is refined, and an overarching narrative structure is evident. Connectives are used.</p>	<p>Identifies a specific (secondary points may be considered, such as: level, method, measure, context, discipline innovation, etc.) research topic.</p> <p>The writing is detailed, scholarly, accessible, and persuasive. The author draws on an array of scholarly literature in line with discipline expectations.</p> <p>Presents specific trends within the field with a sound description of research components (key language is used with accuracy, deeper concepts may also be included) in a relational way (purpose, methods and findings are addressed together). Unpacks evidence. The structure is clear and generally logical. Connectives are used.</p>	<p>Identifies a relatively broad yet acceptable area for the proposed research topic.</p> <p>The writing is detailed, scholarly and accessible. The author draws on some appropriate scholarly literature in line with discipline expectations.</p> <p>Presents broad trends within the field with a sound description of research components (key language is used with accuracy). The structure is clear and generally logical.</p>	<p>The topic is ill-defined, unclearly articulated and/or otherwise not appropriate for study at CSU.</p> <p>The writing may be vague, poorly edited or otherwise not scholarly. The literature review may be substandard, not scholarly or fails to adhere to minimal discipline expectations for a prospective student at this level.</p> <p>The structure is unclear, and trends are not presented meaningfully. The author may simply present a descriptive overview of what has been read.</p>

Aims/Objectives/Research questions*	Presents (a) sophisticated, nuanced research question(s) alluding to a robust research methodology. Key aspects of the question(s) may be presented in a detailed fashion (e.g. locations, measures, stakeholders, etc.) to signal a defined, organised and innovative HDR project. All aspects of the question(s) are meaningfully signposted.	Presents (a) well-structured research question(s) that may allude to a specific paradigm or method. Key aspects of the question(s) may be presented in a detailed fashion (e.g. locations, measures, stakeholders, etc.) to signal a defined, organised HDR project. All aspects of the question(s) are adequately signposted.	Presents (an) appropriately structured research question(s). The question relates broadly to the main topic. Stakeholder(s) and concepts(s) may be presented to signal a defined, manageable HDR project. Few aspects of the question(s) are inadequately signposted.	The research question(s) may be vague, ill-defined or too open-ended. The research question(s) may be too ambitious and/or appear to be under-researched, with little connection to what might be considered a manageable HDR research project.
Significance/ Gap(s)/ Contribution/ Research Problem**	There is a clear argument for the unique contribution to the literature. This argument may draw on a variety of contributions that are well synthesised and compelling.	There is some evidence of a unique contribution to the literature. All points raised are specific but may be somewhat disjointed or uneven in their presentation.	There is some evidence of a worthwhile contribution to the literature. The contributions could be too broad or potentially unfocused.	Contribution(s) is/are not clear or accurate. The author may fail to convince the reader of the importance of the specific project by focusing too much on the field.
Outline of Methodology	<p>Research question (s) are clearly mapped/aligned to the proposed methodology</p> <p>Provides a compelling, detailed, and accurate description of the research methods to be employed within the research project. Procedural detail is clear. Specific discipline terminology is used with consistency and accuracy.</p> <p>Provides a realistic timeline, an understanding of procedures around how the data will be collected and analysed that relates to the research question(s).</p>	<p>The alignment of the methodology with the research question(s) is explicit and accurate.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Research question (s) are partially mapped / aligned to the proposed methodology but more detail is needed.</p> <p>Provides a detailed, accurate description of the research methods to be employed within the research project. Some procedural detail is included. Broad discipline terminology is used with consistency and accuracy.</p> <p>Provides a description of how the data will be collected and analysed</p>	<p>The alignment of the methodology with the research question(s) is implicit and not clearly developed.</p> <p>Or</p> <p>Research question (s) are not adequately mapped / aligned to the proposed methodology.</p> <p>Provides a sound, accurate description of the research methods to be employed within the research project. General research terminology may be used with some consistency.</p> <p>Provides a general description of how the data will be collected</p>	<p>There may be no clear connection between the research question(s) and the proposed methodology.</p> <p>The method may be vague or imprecise. Substantial errors in research conceptualisation and expression may be present.</p> <p>Data collection and analysis are absent, inaccurate or lacking in important detail.</p>



		in relation to the research question(s).	and/or analysed in relation to the research question(s).	
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*Question is used in these criteria, but any appropriate form of objective setting can be accepted.

**Contribution is used as a placeholder for other terms.



Notes

- Numbers and discipline-specific terms have been avoided.
- I have attempted to acknowledge the word restrictions in the conceptualisation of the standards. Key verbs are often repeated to avoid asking too much of the higher performers.
- Candidate details, personal statement, project title and abstract are all currently ungraded. I think these should inform the discussion of context in committee meetings and would be very challenging to meaningfully differentiate.
- Examples and liberal use of the word “may” have been used to ensure sufficient marker discretion is afforded.
- Ethics and theoretical frameworks have been excluded for different reasons (see comments above). They can be added back in if needed.
- There could be room for further delineation of the standards, but this could make the marking process less efficient. This should ideally be negotiated by the committee.
- Weightings have not been given for each section in order to preserve marker discretion.
- It might be worthwhile to include a disclaimer such as: “All marks awarded are based upon both the criteria statements and the discretion of markers. These cannot be challenged after committee finalisation.”

