



Initial Research Outline Rubric (Professional Doctorate)

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) in relation to a real-life problem or issue.</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 relevant sources* in line with discipline expectations. Citation groupings and contradictions may be presented as evidence of extensive reading.</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 relevant sources* in line with discipline expectations.</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 relevant sources* in line with discipline expectations.</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>
Aims/Objectives/Research questions**	<p>Presents (a) sophisticated, nuanced research question(s) alluding to a potentially 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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>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.</p>

Significance/Gap(s)/ Contribution/Research Problem***	There is a clear argument for the unique contribution to a real-life problem or issue. This argument may draw on a variety of contributions that are well synthesised and compelling.	There is some evidence of a unique contribution to a real-life problem or issue. All points raised are specific but may be somewhat disjointed or uneven in their presentation.	There is some evidence of a worthwhile contribution to a real-life problem or issue. 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.
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 in relation to the research question(s).</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 and/or analysed in relation to the research question(s).</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>

*Relevant sources may include, but are not limited to, academic literature, coronial reports, royal commissions, public reports, books, public articles, etc.

**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.”

