GRADUATE STUDENT THESIS/DISSERTATION

DEFENSE EVALUATION

The attached evaluation tool (rubric) is designed to assist in the evaluation of students' ability to successfully prepare and defend their graduate research. The rubric includes seven evaluation criteria, and allows for the addition of criteria important to individual departments/programs. Evaluation of a thesis/dissertation and its defense can be an integral part of graduate student learning outcomes assessment conducted by graduate programs. It is applicable to all programs that have a thesis or dissertation requirement.

This evaluation tool will:

- provide students, prior to their defense, with a clear understanding of the elements of their written thesis/dissertation and its defense deemed most important to the defense committee
- provide multiple perspectives on students' ability to successfully prepare and defend their research and engage in cogent discourse about their chosen field of study
- encourage conversations among departmental colleagues about improving graduate student learning outcomes and assessment
- serve as a potential source of program-level data on the accomplishment of the program's learning outcome objectives, for submission as part of an assessment report

Suggested Instructions (may be modified to suit program needs):
Defense committee members and students should review and become familiar with the criteria in the evaluation tool prior to the defense. The rubric should be scored at the conclusion of the defense, or shortly thereafter, by every member of the defense committee. This cover page (page 1) can then be completed (providing a *summary of the scored ratings* below for each of the criteria in the rubric), returned to the appropriate department/program office, and maintained in a confidential departmental file following the defense (one cover page per evaluator) for use as a valuable tool in graduate student learning outcomes assessment. The remaining rubric pages (2 - 4) can be shared with the student or destroyed.

Student ID:_____ **Student name: _____**
Program: _____
Degree: M.A. _____ M.S. _____ Ph.D. _____
Date of Defense: _____
Evaluator role:
___ Major Advisor ___ Internal Core Committee member
___ External Core Committee member ___ Internal Defense Committee member
___ External Defense Committee member and Defense Chair
Other (explain) _____

Defense Score Summary by Criterion:

Assessment Criteria:	1: _____	4: _____	7: _____
	2: _____	5: _____	8. _____
	3: _____	6: _____	9. _____

Student ID: _____ Evaluator Name/Role: _____ Date: _____

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	N/A	Score
PART I: Written Defense Draft						
1. Mastery of fundamental knowledge in the field	Consistently applies fundamental and advanced concepts to topics in subject area.	Frequently applies fundamental and some advanced concepts to topics in subject area.	Somewhat applies fundamental concepts to topics in subject area.	Does not apply fundamental concepts to topics in subject area.		
2. Ability to access and integrate information into a cohesive overview of current knowledge; ability to critically evaluate the meaning, value, and contribution of published literature in the field	Command and understanding of the current research literature in the field.	Relates and understands the current research literature in the field.	Aware of the research literature in the field.	Knowledge is unrelated to the current research literature in the field.		
3. Imagination and originality of thought	Problem/purpose of study very creative or original with new and innovative ideas; Explored original topic and discovered new outcomes.	Problem/purpose of study original or creative; Design/approach appropriate or innovative.	Problem/purpose of study moderately original or creative; Design/ approach moderately appropriate or innovative.	Problem/purpose of study lacked creativity or not new; Duplication of previous work.		
4. Ability to design and implement an appropriate collection and analysis of data or ability to articulate a critical response to dramatic or artistic theory, literature, design and performance in one's own work or that of another artist	Data interpretation is appropriate and creatively uses correct methodology; identifies weaknesses in interpretation; Demonstrates a an advanced ability to articulate a critical response to dramatic or artistic theory, literature, design and performance in one's own work or that of another artist	Data interpretation is appropriate and uses many correct methodology; identifies some weaknesses in interpretation Demonstrates a an ability to articulate a critical response to dramatic or artistic theory, literature, design and performance in one's own work or that of another artist	Data interpretation is appropriate and uses limited number of correct methodology; identifies no weaknesses in interpretation Demonstrates a an limited ability to articulate a critical response to dramatic or artistic theory, literature, design and performance in one's own work or that of another artist	Data interpretation is inappropriate and/or uses incorrect methodology; identifies no weaknesses in interpretation Demonstrates a lack of ability to articulate a critical response to dramatic or artistic theory, literature, design and performance in one's own work or that of another artist		

Student ID: _____ Evaluator Name/Role: _____ Date: _____

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	N/A	Score
5. Ability to draw reasoned conclusions from a body of knowledge	Discussion was superior, accurate, and engaging; Conclusions/summaries and recommendations appropriate and clearly based on outcomes.	Discussion sufficient and with few errors; Greater foundation needed from past work in area; Conclusions/summary based on outcomes and appropriate, included some recommendations.	Major topics or concepts inaccurately described; Considerable relevant discussion missing; Conclusions/summary not entirely supported by findings/outcomes.	Little discussion of project findings/outcomes; Displayed poor grasp of material; Conclusion/ summary not supported by findings/outcomes.		
6. Impact of research on the field	Thesis or dissertation is very relevant or has significant importance/ authenticity to field and will make an important contribution to field.	Thesis or dissertation has fair relevance or significance/authenticity to field and will make a good contribution to field.	Thesis or dissertation only moderate relevance or significance/authenticity to field and will make a nominal contribution to field.	Thesis or dissertation has little relevance or significance/authenticity to field and will make little contribution to field.		
PART II: Oral Defense						
7. Oral presentation and defense of thesis/dissertation	Masterfully defends research by providing clear and insightful answers to questions; Uses presentation resources as a guide, gives detailed explanations, is easily understandable, and keeps appropriate eye contact with the audience.	Competently defends research by providing very helpful answers to questions; may occasionally manifest need for further reflection on minor points; Uses presentation resources as a guide, is easily understandable, and keeps eye contact with the audience with the audience.	Adequately defends research; answers questions, but often with little insight; frequently shows a need for deeper reflection on minor points; Relies too much on presentation and has difficulty speaking freely to the audience, and is somewhat comfortable with the topic.	Does not adequately defend research; does not answer key questions; frequently shows a need for deeper reflection on vital points; Reads the material from presentation to make the report and is clearly not comfortable with the topic.		

COMMENTS:

Student ID: _____ Evaluator Name/Role: _____ Date: _____

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	N/A	Score
8. Additional Assessment Criterion:						
9. Additional Assessment Criterion:						

ADDITIONAL COIMMENTS: