



**SMU Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development
PhD QUALIFYING & COMPREHENSIVE EXAM
GRADE REPORT**



Doctoral Qualifying Exam

Student Name or Number _____

Question # _____

Rate Each Dimension:

RATING

	VP Very Problematic	P Problematic	G Good	VG Very Good	E Excellent
1. APA Style:	VP	P	G	VP	E
2. Organization:	VP	P	G	VG	E
3. Clarity of communication:	VP	P	G	VG	E
4. Detail and completeness of answer:	VP	P	G	VG	E
5. Accuracy of information in answer:	VP	P	G	VG	E
6. Coherence and rationale of answer:	VP	P	G	VG	E
7. Documentation/Citation:	VP	P	G	VG	E
SCORE:	FAIL/REMEDIATE		-----PASS-----		PASS w/ DISTINCTION

Comments (required for remediate or fail): PLEASE ATTACH EXTRA PAGES IF NEEDED

OVERALL EVALUATION: ___ FAIL ___ REMEDIATE ___ PASS ___ PASS w/DISTINCTION

Guidelines for Scoring:

1. If 5 items or more are Problematic or Very Problematic, the grade is Fail.
2. If any item is Problematic or Very Problematic, the grade is Remediate.

Additional Information: (See attached Criteria and Guidelines)

Doctoral qualifying exams can be remediated only one time. If the remediation isn't satisfactory, then the grade is Fail.

Annette Caldwell Simmons School of Education and Human Development

Descriptions of the 7 Scoring Dimensions for PhD Qualifying Exams Grading Form

Introduction

A brief definition of each dimension is provided along with “tips” for the PhD student. These suggested tips are intended to provide more detail or application examples for each dimension, but are not meant to be exhaustive of all possible aspects of the qualifying exam responses.

1. APA Style: The extent to which the format and style of the paper conforms to the requirements of the *Publication Manual of the American Psychological Association, 5th Edition*.

Tips: Rather than require all of the extensive detail of the APA style, this dimension focuses on the avoidance of the common errors in student writing, such as use of first names or initials instead of only the last-name of referenced author(s), lack of attention to the “levels” of headings (e.g., centered, side-head, paragraph head), improper use of lists (those within paragraphs requiring lower-case letters or indented numbered lists), and too extensive reliance on quotations. The best way to follow the important aspects of APA style is to look at the sections in the manual that show examples of correct text.

2. Organization: The extent to which the paper is framed by important distinctions and structured by recognizable themes. The degree to which the paper is logically ordered and sections of a paper identified. Organization is reflected in how readily the reader can understand the “fit” of any passage to the overall structure of the paper.

Tips: The best professional papers use extensive headings, organized by APA levels. For a review paper, an advanced organizer is prominently displayed (“This review will cover a, then b, then, c...”) in the first section of the paper. Good organization follows the old saying, “Tell them what you are going to tell them, detail it, then tell them what you told them” with preview, body, and conclusion all synchronized.

3. Clarity of communication: Each section of the paper must provide the reader with a clear understanding of descriptions, analyses, claims, and conclusions presented in the paper. Clarity of communication is reflected in the clarity of sentence and paragraph writing, good word choice, and in the clarity of the thoughts expressed in the writing.

Tips: Some professional writers include a topic sentence for every paragraph so that the reader has a clear understanding of the purpose of the paragraph. Clear writing can be read aloud and even a non-expert can gain some degree of understanding from it. Clear spoken messages have a “flow” to them and so should written communications. Some professionals read their material aloud and then revise their work to avoid any confusing or overly complex expressions.

4. Detail and completeness of answer: The extent to which the paper provides a specific and thorough answer to the original question. Detail and completeness are reflected both in the choice of educational studies, theories, and/or practices for review, as well as in the depth of the review. Each section of a complete paper provides supportive details, evidence, or references for each important point.

Tips: Some say “there is rarely an original thought, but only those adapted from someone else’s ideas and writings.” In other words, every claim, opinion (to be avoided except in a discussion section introduced with proper caution), statement of assumed fact, or conclusion should be supported by references, data, evidence, or some other supportive information. “Back up everything you say!” In the extreme, every paragraph would have

a topic sentence, supportive detail, and a “wrap up,” factual sentence. Be sure you include the most important facts, findings, references, or conclusions without leaving obvious “gaps” that an expert reader would quickly find.

5. Accuracy of information in answer: The extent to which the paper provides accurate terminology, summaries of educational studies, accurate quantitative information, clear exposition of theories, and/or accurate details of methods and practices. Accuracy of information is reflected in the extent of correspondence between what is stated in the paper and what the expert reader determines to be true.

Tips: After drafting specific facts, data, statistics, “rules of thumb,” or terminology from research methodology, go back to texts or sources and check the accuracy of your information. Better yet, keep some reference texts near your writing space, along with assembled references, so that you can check details as you write.

6. Coherence and rationale of answer: The extent to which the argument developed in the paper is logically valid, closely reasoned, and persuasive. Unlike the organization or clarity of sections of the paper, this dimension looks at the final outcome or effect on the reader of the entire paper. At the end of the paper, the reader should be more convinced or more instructed than before reading the paper.

Tips: After drafting most of the paper, have someone else read it and tell you what they learned or if they were convinced of some important point. Step back and say to yourself, “Did I really say what I intended to say with this entire paper?” Be sure that you don’t commit a common error of adding some personal opinion, unrelated to the main body of the paper, in the conclusions at the end. Instead, write conclusions that closely follow the flow, supportive evidence, and purpose of the entire paper.

7. Documentation/Citation: The extent to which claims about educational studies, theories, and/or practices are supported by references to peer-reviewed studies and other pertinent evidence, listed in the reference section and mentioned in the body of the paper.

Tips: Journal reviewers often inspect your reference list to see if you have included some of the major researchers in a topic area and the kinds of journals or sources that you selected. Try to find references from well recognized authors, peer-reviewed journals, and otherwise credible sources. If you find that you have a “slim collection” of references at the end, perhaps you need to re-focus the topic, purpose, or hypotheses of the paper to draw on research areas that provide better documentation.