

School: CLAS	Department: Spanish & Portuguese

Components of a Dissertation and their Characteristics at Different Quality Levels

Components	Outcome Quality Levels			
	Outstanding - 4	Very Good - 3	Acceptable - 2	Unacceptable - 1
Introduction: Set-up of central thesis/ideas and approach	Sharp articulation of thesis/main ideas that highlights originality of content and approach, significance, and persuasive need for project.	Clear, careful exposition of dissertation focus and central ideas that demonstrates usefulness of project for filling existing gaps in field.	A straightforward, routine presentation of the problem, content, and main ideas.	Thesis or central ideas unclear. Unconvincing need for the project.
Grounding in scholarship & historical context	Agile dialogue with existing scholarship that showcases originality and is interwoven with project's literary-historical context.	Thoughtful use of existing sources to set up and develop ideas within the project's literary-historical context.	Demonstrates knowledge of relevant existing scholarship and basic relevance to project.	Weak grasp of existing scholarship or literary-historical context and their relationship to the project.
Conceptual or theoretical framework	Incisive conceptual framework that draws judiciously on critical theory to forge an original, sustained approach.	Clearly articulated conceptual framework sustained or developed throughout.	Basic conceptual framework with some use of critical theory, although connections may not always be clear.	Basic concepts unclear. Weak or inconsistent use of theoretical sources.
Argument and analyses of literary or cultural texts	Penetrating and original textual analyses that develop and illuminate an elegant, inventive line of argument.	Strong textual analyses well connected to a sustained argument and the project's thesis.	Relationship of textual analyses to project's main ideas is clear but would benefit from additional development.	Poorly developed or confused argument, with unclear connections to textual analyses.
Conclusion: Implications & Significance	Persuasive summation of project's significance and implications that point to exciting options for future work.	Strong summation of project's achievements and importance for the field.	Solid recap of the main chapter and project ideas and findings.	Weak summary or unconvincing statement of project's importance.
Overall	Innovative & significant with indisputable impact on field.	Solid, clear presentation with good potential for future refinement and impact.	Covers the necessary components of a dissertation in a competent fashion.	Disorganized, incomplete, or unclear completion of project.

*Adapted from Barbara Lovitts' *Making the Implicit Explicit: Creating Performance Expectations for the Dissertation*, 2007.