Components of a Dissertation and their Characteristics at Different Quality Levels

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Components</th>
<th>Outstanding- 4</th>
<th>Very Good Exceeds Expectations - 3</th>
<th>Acceptable Meets Expectations - 2</th>
<th>Unacceptable Below Expectations- 1</th>
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| Introduction/Statement of the Problem | • Compelling, original problem  
• Makes a persuasive, convincing case of need for study  
• Results will make a significant contribution to practice | • Tackles interesting and important problem for student’s work  
• Purpose of study is clearly stated  
• Need for study is supported by grounding in relevant context | • Question(s) not grounded in a problem  
• Shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the problem  
• Problem and questions poorly or not articulated at all | |
| Grounding in the Literature       | • Places the work within a larger context  
• Sophisticated integration, synthesis and critique of literature from related fields | • Shows understanding of the relevant literature  
• Provides a meaningful summary of the literature  
• Literature informs study | | • Fails to cite important, relevant articles  
• Misinterprets the literature |
| Theoretical or conceptual framework\(^2\) | • Theoretical/conceptual framework is integrated with study, illuminating all aspects of study  
• Sophisticated understanding of theoretical framework | • Study grounded in relevant theoretical or conceptual framework  
• Framework is understood and explained  
• Framework is used to interpret findings | • No framework  
• Theoretical/conceptual framework lacks relevance or is inappropriate  
• is poorly understood  
• is not used effectively to interpret findings | |

1 Evaluators should check “3” when the level of work in a particular area is better than acceptable/meets expectations but less than outstanding.

2 A theoretical or conceptual framework is optional for an EdD dissertation. Existence of a theoretical framework is not necessary to meet the standard of acceptable.
### Application yields insightful findings

- Design and method are creative, sophisticated
- Demonstrates novel or very effective use of methods
- Nuanced understanding of methods and study limitations

### Research Design and Execution

- Research design and method are appropriate to question
- Study executed competently
- Limitations of study identified

### Presentation of Findings and Quality of Interpretation

- Findings are appropriately presented
- Presents evidence to support conclusions
- Findings interpreted correctly
- Findings address research questions

### Discussion/Conclusion

- Results are synthesized
- Conclusions are supported by the evidence
- Research questions answered
- Relates findings to literature

### Implications

- Has implications for the knowledge in the field

### theoritical framework is absent

- Uses the wrong methodology or tools
- Data are not handled carefully; does not have appropriate controls or controls groups
- Data seriously flawed
<table>
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<tr>
<th>for Research</th>
<th>upon what was done</th>
<th>implications of study for future research</th>
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</table>
| Implications for Policy or Practice | • Makes novel contribution to policy development or practice and explains | • Findings and conclusions have implications for educational policy or practice  
• Implications are linked to data  
| | | • No or insignificant implications for educational policy or practice  
• Implications not based on findings |
| Overall Writing and Organization | • Elegantly written  
• Writing fully engages and improves the study | • Competently written and organized  
• Follows appropriate style manual  
• Few if any typos, grammatical errors  
| | | • Poorly written  
• Poorly organized  
• Many typographical and grammatical errors |
| Overall | • Original & significant innovative  
• Moves field forward  
• Will make significant contributions to practice at some level | • Solid  
• Well written & organized  
• Makes contribution but not field-changing  
| | | • Makes no contribution |

*Adapted from Barbara Lovitts & Ellen Wert, *Developing Quality Dissertations in the Social Sciences*, 2009.*