Mexican American Studies – MAS Graduate Student
Thesis/Dissertation Defense Evaluation
Revised 5/26/2021

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 Name: _____ Student ID: _____

Program: _____

Degree: ☐ MS ☐ Ph.D.

Date of Defense: _____

Evaluator Role:
☐ Advisor Chair   ☐ Internal Core Committee Member
☐ External Core Committee Member   ☐ Other (explain): _____
☐ External Defense Committee Member and
   Defense Chair   _____

Defense Score Summary by Criterion:

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

MASTER'S Thesis Defense Evaluation					
Learning objective 1: Demonstrate skills in critical analysis of research literature and demonstrate the ability to design and conduct original research in the interdisciplinary field of Mexican American Studies and across relevant disciplines.					
Assessment Criteria	**4 - Exceptional**	**3 - Strong**	**2 - Marginal**	**1 - Unacceptable**	**Score**
1. Mastery of fundamental knowledge in the field of MAS. Demonstrate skills in critical analysis of research literature.	Command and understanding of the current research literature in the field of MAS and across relevant disciplines and is grounded in relevant theories. Consistently applies fundamental and advanced concepts to topics in subject area.	Relates and understands the current research literature in the field of MAS and across relevant disciplines and is grounded in relevant theories. Frequently applies fundamental and some advanced concepts to topics in subject area.	Somewhat applies fundamental concepts to topics in subject area. Aware of the research literature in the field.	Does not apply fundamental concepts to topics in subject area. Knowledge is unrelated to the current research literature in the field.	
2. Ability to design and implement an appropriate collection and analysis of data or ability to articulate a critical response to theory or a creative product.	Data interpretation is appropriate and creatively uses correct methodology; identifies weaknesses in interpretation; Demonstrates an advanced ability to articulate a critical response to theory or a creative product.	Data interpretation is appropriate and uses many correct methodologies; identifies some weaknesses in interpretation. Demonstrates an ability to articulate a critical response to theory or a creative product.	Data interpretation is appropriate and uses limited number of correct methodologies; identifies no weaknesses in interpretation. Demonstrates a limited ability to articulate a critical response to theory or a creative product.	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 theory or a creative product.	

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 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.	
5. Impact of research on the field	Thesis is very relevant or has significant importance/ authenticity to field and will make an important contribution to field.	Thesis has fair relevance or significance/ authenticity to field and will make a good contribution to field.	Thesis has only moderate relevance or significance/ authenticity to field and will make a nominal contribution to field.	Thesis has little relevance. or significance/ authenticity to field and will make little contribution to field.	

Learning Objective 2. Apply Mexican American studies theories to think critically about social justice in the context of Mexican American/Mexican origin communities.					
Assessment Criteria	**4 - Exceptional**	**3 - Strong**	**2 - Marginal**	**1 - Unacceptable**	**Score**
6. Developed Research with Community Impact	Work ably identifies the community/communities', positions it/then as an integral or significant part of research question, research design, identifying how the impact of the research impacts or serves the community in question either through policy or practice or both. Impact may include knowledge production and the analysis, representation and inclusion of communities in research.	Work identifies the community/communities, but its role in forming part of the research (as an integral or significant part of research question, research design) is not as clearly defined as "exceptional." As such, identifying how the impact of the research impacts or serves the community in question may not be strongly articulated.	Research may have been designed with a community in mind, but rather the work may be more theoretical in approach so that practical application was not/is not an integral or significant part of research question.	Work does not emanate from a community. Identifying how the research might impact or serve the community was not clear or poorly articulated question.	

Learning Objective 3: Contextualize and analyze the experiences of Mexican Americans within a broader hemispheric perspective -- from pre-Columbian to contemporary -- by applying relevant theories and principles from Mexican American Studies and other relevant disciplines in order to analyze the complex realities and issues faced in a hemispheric context of the Americas.

Assessment Criteria	4 - Exceptional	3 - Strong	2 - Marginal	1 - Unacceptable	Score
7. Applies a Hemispheric Perspective to MAS (*To be assessed by MAS faculty only. Although a student's research may not be directly centered in a Hemispheric perspective, MAS faculty should pose questions in the orals to determine how well a student can contextualize their learning in MAS in relation to a hemispheric context.*) Hemispheric perspectives may include migration, immigration,	• Applies relevant theories and principles from Mexican American Studies and relevant disciplines to understand the complex realities and issues faced in a hemispheric context. • Demonstrates the ways that structures, processes, and cultures within and outside the US' political borders mutually influence each other • Applies knowledge and skills to implement sophisticated, appropriate and workable solutions. The research reflects critical and grounded analysis	Plans and evaluates relevant theories and principles from Mexican American Studies and relevant disciplines in order to understand the complex realities and issues faced in a hemispheric context of the Americas using a multi-disciplinary perspective. Identifies a range of relevant actions.	Formulates practical yet elementary solutions and challenges to the topic in a hemispheric context of the Americas with at least two interdisciplinary perspectives. Organization of evidence and analysis reflects clear relationships of theories and literature that contextualizes the research within the field of Mexican American Studies in a broader hemispheric perspective with minor lapses in critical assessment and validity of evidence.	Defines relevant challenges related to the research from a hemispheric perspective in basic ways, including a limited number of perspectives and solutions. Alternatively, applying a hemispheric perspective is missing but would have been relevant to this analysis and application of knowledge.	

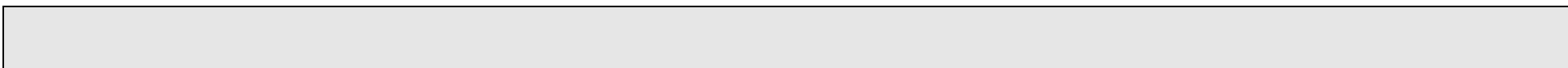| transnational issues, Indigeneity and Indigenous peoples.	and engages interconnected systems relevant to a transnational perspective or application.				
Comments:					

Learning Objective 4:
Articulate and demonstrate an understanding and analysis of Mexican American/ Chicanx/Latinx/Indigenous and contemporary issues, social movements and related theories, such as critical race and border theories.

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	Score
8. Critically analyzes specific relevant literature in the process of problem solving relative to an analysis of Mexican American/ Chicanx/Latinx/Indigenous and contemporary issues, social movements and related theories, such, as critical race and border theories. Themes may vary based on relevant research areas.	• Contextualizes the specific research into the broader intellectual enterprise of Mexican American Studies. • Synthesizes information and develops evidence of their argument to develop novel (but applicable) solutions thus contributing new understanding to the field. • Applies relevant literature and contemporary issues, social movements and related theories appropriately in their analysis or methods.	• Demonstrates broad familiarity with the discipline's literature. • Applies relevant literature in their analysis and methods. Incorporates literature from diverse disciplines relative to Mexican American Studies.	Their analysis or methods has gaps in their application to the research. Their research lacks key analysis or literature relative to contemporary issues, social movements and related theories to at least one of these constituents: Mexican American/ Chicanx/Latinx/Indigenous.	• Does not demonstrate familiarity with discipline literature and contemporary issues, social movements and related theories in their analysis/methods. • Does not apply relevant literature and contemporary issues, social movements and related theories appropriately in their analysis or methods.	

COMMENTS:

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

Learning Objective 5: Develop and apply a theoretical lens of transdisciplinary Mexican American studies that draws on, and is grounded in, relevant frameworks, such as gendered dynamics, racialization, marginalization of communities and decoloniality.

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	Score
9. Develop and apply a theoretical lens of transdisciplinary Mexican American studies in research and/or creative products as a body of knowledge, which is grounded in relevant frameworks, such as -- but not limited to -- gendered dynamics, racialization, marginalization of communities and decoloniality. .	• Develops evidence understood through relevant transdisciplinary arguments and frameworks to produce innovative solutions/new knowledge, thus contributing new or nuanced understanding to the field of MAS.	• Demonstrates broad familiarity with the disciplines' literature. • Applies relevant literature/theory in their analysis and methods. Incorporates theory from diverse disciplines relative to the research and to Mexican American Studies in their knowledge production.	The analysis or methods have gaps in their application to the research. Their research lacks key analysis or literature and/or relevant frameworks relative to contemporary issues, social movements and related theories to at least one of these constituents: Mexican American/ Chicanx/Latinx/Indige-nous.	• Does not demonstrate familiarity with discipline literature and related theories in their analysis/methods. • Does not apply relevant literature/framew orks in their analysis or methods.	

COMMENTS:

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

PART II: Oral Defense					
Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	Score
10. Oral presentation and defense of thesis	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.	

Assessment Criteria	4=Exceptional	3=Strong	2=Marginal	1=Unacceptable	Score

11. Additional Assessment Criterion:				