

**Dominican School of Philosophy & Theology**  
**Rubric for assessing academic research and writing skills**

The following table specifies skills related to DSPT Institutional Goals and program outcomes, as outlined in the 2017 *Ratio Studiorum Generalis* (RSG), Sections I.14.1-10 of the Dominican Order. The RSG indicates that “students use critical thinking skills to *grasp content and methodologies*, and to *make synthetic judgments and apply principles across disciplines to contemporary contexts, working towards constructive solutions that benefit communities*. It also indicates that students develop an *interior disposition (habitus)* that *fosters intellectual collaboration* in a manner that *test and deepens* one’s own grasp of the truth.

| CATEGORY                                                                                                                                                                                                          | Failure                                                                                                    | Unacceptable                                                                                                                           | Satisfactory                                                                                                                                                   | Good                                                                                                                                                                                             | Excellent                                                                                                                                         |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>1 – Research Skills for Critical Thinking</b><br><b>Familiarity with current debates/discussions related to a topic of interest, especially with those deemed experts on the topic</b><br>[IGA1, MAO2-3]       | Has a limited understanding of the principles and approach to an area of inquiry                           | Has a basic knowledge of principles of an area of inquiry, but is reticent to explore a variety of opinions from experts               | Has a good knowledge of principles operative in an area, and identified, but not sufficiently, some key thinkers whose work is integral to a topic of research | Has a thorough working knowledge of scholars related to the topic of interest but lacks a good balance of pro and con opinions. Too readily focuses on those who agree with reader’s perspective | Has a thorough working knowledge of scholars, and chosen a balanced set of experts, whose works will add quality to the proposed topic of inquiry |
| <b>2 – Research Skills for Data Collection</b><br><b>Familiarity with relevant professional publications (journals, series, books, etc.), as well as the use of relevant online databases</b> [IGA3, MAO3-5]      | Has failed (or refused) to take the time to read broadly on the history and ongoing development of a topic | Has some knowledge of the relevant literature, but tends to skew reading in one direction, to the exclusion of other important sources | Has a foundational and balanced knowledge of the topic, though is skewed or limited in some manner.                                                            | Can locate and engage with relevant source material using a variety of research tools, including online databases, in order to gather a breadth of sources that promote a balanced understanding | Engages not only with the most relevant sources on the topic, but also discovers new sources that enrich perspectives and understanding           |
| <b>3 – Research Skill for Synthetic Judgments and Interdisciplinarity</b><br><b>Ability to locate, review and properly summarize primary sources, presenting the main argument and conclusion</b> [IGA1, MAO 1-3] | Unable to grasp the fundamental argument (thesis) in a work, and/or is often lost in the details           | Grasps the basic principles of an argument, but is not able to go beyond the most basic interpretation                                 | Can properly identify and summarize the main points of an argument, but misses important secondary points and/or nuances                                       | Has the capacity to identify both the main argument and secondary points, with an expressed willingness to learn outside of one’s own personal “comfort zone”                                    | Has a sophisticated grasp of the argument, and can relate the information to other arguments both within and outside of the academic discipline   |

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| CATEGORY                                                                                                                                                                                                    | Failure                                                                                                                                | Unacceptable                                                                                                                                                    | Satisfactory                                                                                                                                                    | Good                                                                                                               | Excellent                                                                                                                                                                          |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>4 – Research Skill for Collaboration</b><br><b>Uses secondary references (English and other research languages) in a balanced manner that advances the conversation [IGA1-A3, B1, MAO4-5]</b>            | Unable or unwilling to read broadly and incorporate opinions outside of one’s own paradigm                                             | Reluctant to engage with contradictory opinions, or with contemporary interpretations of primary historical sources                                             | A basic capacity to identify and engage with scholarly interpretations of a primary source(s)                                                                   | An ability to engage a broad spectrum of opinions and interpretations of a primary source(s)                       | Engages secondary sources, including foreign language resources as appropriate, in a manner which advances a discussion and offers constructive solutions that benefit communities |
| <b>5 – Skill for Developing the Argument</b><br><b>The ability to conceptualize and develop an argument [IGA3, IGB1, MAO 4-5]</b>                                                                           | Unable or unwilling to identify a topic that is both scholarly and doable                                                              | Able to formulate a topic but unwilling or unable to adjust the topic into a doable project                                                                     | Creates a doable project that has a clear trajectory as identified by a clear outline                                                                           | Has a clear thesis statement that is structured into a coherent doable project as demonstrated by a proper outline | Uses the results of ongoing research and writing (see skill 6) in an iterative manner to focus and refine the argument                                                             |
| <b>6 – Skill for Structuring the Argument</b><br><b>Uses primary and secondary resources to produce a fair and balanced argument [IGA3, B1, MAO3-5]</b>                                                     | Unable or unwilling to engage the area sufficiently to engender creative thinking; remains unreasonably entrenched in a perspective(s) | Able to synthesize information, but in a limited or biased manner such that foregone conclusions are reinforced                                                 | Achieves a coherent argument that incorporates the results of balanced research but lacks nuance and/or innovation                                              | Offers a clear and well-argued conclusion that draws upon primary and secondary sources in an even-handed manner   | Presents a clear and balanced written work that contributes to the conversation, even offering new and creative interpretations that benefit communities.                          |
| <b>7 – Skill for Professional Presentation of the Argument</b><br><b>Ability to produce a professional research document, following professional guidelines for academic publication [IGA2, B1, MAO4-5]</b> | Has a poor grasp of proper English grammar, diction, style, and format                                                                 | Has basic skills with written English but lacks knowledge and use of standard formatting requirements, e.g. proper footnoting or other documentation procedures | Has a good grasp of writing and formatting skills and is able to organize the research material in a professional but lacks clarity in the flow of the argument | Presents a finished product that flows well and is easy to follow the argument                                     | Presents a finished product that integrates well into ongoing discussions or debates in the relevant field of study                                                                |