Rubric for Geography Goal 4 and Planning Goal 5—Students will demonstrate proficiency in research skills

**Exceeding: 93-100 points out of 100 total points**

**Content:** The senior thesis addresses a clearly stated central topic and it explicitly addresses a relevant research objective/question/hypothesis. Choice of the thesis topic and the experimental methods used to address the research question are entirely appropriate. Use of raw data, collected first hand or from other sources, is synthesized in an effective and creative manner as to address the research question. The paper demonstrates a comprehensive and sophisticated understanding of the topic.

**Organization and development:** The main point of each section is clear. Each section leads clearly to the next and sustains the paper’s topic and direction. Conclusions are appropriate given the data and analytical results and are expressed within the context of the current literature available on the paper’s topic.

**Communication:** The writer is obviously aware of and committed to communicating with an appropriate, identifiable audience.

**Mechanics:** The paper is clear, concise, and creative. Mechanical and grammatical errors are few. The thesis shows competent editing and careful proofreading. The formatting guidelines outlined in the “Guidelines for Thesis Preparation” are clearly followed. Data, tables, and figures are appropriately formatted. References are appropriate and accurately cited throughout the paper and on the reference page.

**Exceeding: 85-92 points out of 100 total points**

**Content:** The paper responds appropriately if not always directly to the specific assignment. The paper topic is appropriate and the research objective/question/hypothesis is reasonably clear and well-stated. The experimental methods used are appropriately selected. Use of raw data, collected first hand or from other sources, is synthesized in a way that supports the research question, but contains a few noteworthy flaws in either its collection or presentation. The paper demonstrates a good understanding of the topic at hand.

**Organization and development:** Overall organization is clear and logical; however, some individual sentences, even an occasional paragraph, may require reworking or relocation. Conclusions are appropriate given the data and analytical results and consider the major issues addressed in the current literature.

**Communication:** The writer’s language may be less specific or appropriate. Vocabulary usage suggests some thought in choice and sensitivity to audience.

**Mechanics:** Though the paper may contain minor grammatical and mechanical errors, these do not detract substantially from a good paper. The formatting guidelines outlined in the “Guidelines for Thesis Preparation” are generally followed. Data, tables, and figures are mostly clear and correct. References are appropriate and accurately cited.
Meeting: 70-84 points out of 100 total points

Content: The paper is organized around a central idea and addresses the specific assignment. Its central topic and the research objective/question/hypothesis, however, may be less clearly defined. The experimental methods used may not have been appropriately selected. Use of either raw data, collected first hand or from other sources, is incorporated in a way that supports the research question, but either contains numerous noteworthy flaws in either its collection or presentation, or relies somewhat on the interpretation of others. The paper demonstrates a basic understanding of topic.

Organization and development: The paper’s organization is generally apparent, but transitions may be weak and lapses in paragraph/section unity may lessen the paper’s effectiveness and weaken its clarity. Major issues related to the paper’s topic may be overlooked or underexplained. Conclusions are based on the data and analytical results and may be loosely related to the current literature.

Communication: Awareness of audience is less evident. The writer’s choice of voice and vocabulary indicates a limited understanding of the intended audience.

Mechanics: Most sentences are correct, but some may contain errors in grammar, punctuation, or sentence structure. Errors are distinct and noticeable, but not so severe as to impede understanding. The formatting guidelines outlined in the “Guidelines for Thesis Preparation” are somewhat followed. Data, tables, and figures are incomplete or incorrectly formatted. Some references may not be appropriate or accurately cited.

Approaching: 50-69 points out of 100 total points

Content: The paper may not address a central topic or may have one that is too obvious or general to sustain the paper’s development. A research objective/question/hypothesis may not be explicitly stated in the paper. The experimental methods used may not have been appropriately selected. Use of either raw data, collected first hand or from other sources, is incorporated in a way that provides weak support for the research question, and either contains numerous noteworthy flaws in either its collection or presentation, or relies heavily on the interpretation made by others. The paper demonstrates a limited understanding of the topic.

Organization and development: The writing is disorganized, making the paper hard to follow. Major issues related to the paper’s topic are not addressed. Conclusions are drawn that may not be related to the data and analytical results and they may not be related to the current literature.

Communication: The writer’s choice of voice and vocabulary indicates a lack of understanding of the intended audience. The writer does not exhibit sufficient control over the clear, effective expression of ideas.

Mechanics: Spelling and grammar mistakes are numerous and distracting. Mechanical problems impede understanding. The reader is often forced to pause or backtrack to follow discussion. The writer needs to revise extensively for clarity, focus, and correctness. The formatting guidelines outlined in the “Guidelines for Thesis Preparation” are not followed. Data, tables, and figures are incomplete or incorrectly done and references are inappropriate and not acknowledged.
Failing: <50 points out of 100 total points

**Content:** The paper lacks a central topic and a research objective/question/hypothesis may not explicitly stated. The experimental methods used may not have been appropriately selected. The absence of data or the use of either raw data, collected first hand or from other sources, is incorporated in a way that does not support the research question, and contains numerous noteworthy flaws in either its collection or presentation, or relies solely on the interpretation made by others. The paper demonstrates a poor/absent understanding of the topic.

**Organization and development:** The paper’s organization may be random or the paper may lack focus. The paper shows little development. Support of ideas is missing. The paper may be off the topic or be unduly brief. Conclusions are missing or they are not be related to the data and analytical results. Conclusions also are not related to the current literature.

**Communication:** The writer’s choice of voice and vocabulary is inappropriate for the specific assignment.

**Mechanics:** Mechanical errors are frequent and serious; they stall the paper and undermine its intelligibility. There are no supporting data, tables, and figures. There are no citations or references and evidence of plagiarism is apparent.

Standards based on score (out of 100) on research project as follows:

- **Exceeding** = 85-100
- **Meeting** = 70-84
- **Approaching** = 50-69
- **Failing** = <50
Rubric for Geography Goal 5 and Planning Goal 6— Students will be able to prepare and deliver clear and cogent oral presentations

1. Exceeding Standard (85-100)
   a. Well organized presentation with clear integration of content.
   b. Displayed deep insight into the topic being investigated.
   c. Explained and expanded on information in slides during the presentation. Oriented audience to tables, figures and graphs and explicitly led them through the analysis.
   d. Visual aids (e.g., tables, figures, graphs, photos) were well designed, of high quality, and communicated material effectively.
   e. Appeared relaxed, confident, and professional. Spoke clearly, established eye contact with audience throughout the presentation.
   f. Answered questions clearly and demonstrated mastery of the subject matter.

2. Meeting Standard (70-84)
   a. An organized presentation with a clear delineation of research objective/question, methodology, and significance of results.
   b. Displayed a good understanding of the topic being investigated.
   c. Oriented audience to slides and explicitly led them through the analysis.
   d. Visual aids communicated material effectively and were of good quality.
   e. Spoke clearly and extemporaneous with few references to notes. Appeared confident and established eye contact with audience throughout the presentation, although may have displayed some evidence of nervousness.
   f. Answered questions clearly and demonstrated strong knowledge of the subject matter.

3. Approaching Standard (50-69)
   a. Presentation included a description of the research objective/question, methodology, and significance of results.
   b. Demonstrated a basic understanding of the topic being investigated.
   c. Slides included research objective/question, methods, data, and significance, but presenter failed to actively refer to slides during much of the presentation.
   d. Visual aids were appropriate; however, the design was such that they were difficult to read and understand.
   e. Spoke audibly, but read much of the presentation verbatim from notes or off slides, used distracting speech pattern (“like, you know, uh”, etc.) numerous times, and/or failed to make eye contact with audience.
   f. Answered questions reasonably well, although knowledge of the topic beyond the immediate project was not demonstrated.

4. Does Not Meet Standard (<50)
   a. Failed to describe the research objective/question, methodology, or the significance of the results.
   b. Demonstrated insufficient knowledge of the topic being investigated. Numerous errors in usage of terminology or errors of fact which reflect a lack of understanding of the research project and results.
   c. Slides failed to summarize research objective/question, methods, or data.
   d. Visual aids were not designed to communicate material effectively.
   e. Spoke quietly or mumbled such that much of the presentation was inaudible.
   f. Answers to questions demonstrated insufficient knowledge of topic.