Examples of positive comments – good features of an AMS thesis

- Systematic presentation of literature search strategies, including search terms, databases, items found and items used
- Adequate description of research method, with references to appropriate literature
- The research question was clear and specific
- Shows good knowledge of the area, both theoretical debates and existing empirical data
- Thoroughly researched
- Clear and logical development
- Includes critical analysis, not just description
- There is consistency between the research question and the methods used to answer it
- The argument is explicitly stated at the beginning, and the following chapters closely follow the outline given. Excellent structure and organisation.
- Excellent use of the literature; returns to the literature with further questions at various stages in the thesis.
- Clearly identifies the aims of the research

Examples of negative comments – features which reduced the mark

- Does not acknowledge the limitations of the study
- Student needed to pay more attention to scope – too much ground was covered
- There was a lack of theoretical framework – the concepts being used were not made explicit or discussed in depth
- The introduction does not explain why the research question matters
- The reliance on anecdotal evidence or assumptions of the author is problematic
- Lacks a clear discussion of terminology
- There is no clear conclusion
- Some issues are dismissed too swiftly
- There is confusion between concepts which are similar, but not the same
- Needs greater integration of research findings with existing theoretical debates
- Sometimes not clear whose arguments or views are being presented, the student’s or those of an author previously mentioned
- More sign-posting needed – difficult to follow in places
- Be wary of concluding too much, going beyond what the argument actually shows
- Too much reliance on a single work of one author
• Too much reporting, not enough analysis
• Clinical terms should be explained for a public health audience
• In the Discussion section there was an over-reliance on a return to the literature to describe the problem being investigated rather than a discussion of the data presented in the report
• Attention to proof-reading to eliminate typographical errors and problems in expression, grammar, punctuation and labelling of tables etc

Comments specifically related to empirical qualitative studies (primary data collection)
• Needs better justification of the sample – why these participants?
• Better to include lots of the participants’ voices – not enough presentation of direct and extended quotes
• The student should have interrogated the data more, looked for more complexity
• Requires greater interrogation of the research findings with reference to the existing literature

Lynn Gillam and Heather Rowe
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