

Help Needed — Assessment Checklist

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Print this and go down the whole list, ticking every issue you face. **Be honest.**

Read the result as a ladder: **the deepest category you have ticks in is your answer.**

Basic editing

The AI setup for this is free. We recommend the model, give you the prompts, and charge only for the final human review — a few hours, not an engagement.

- ☐ My main problem is only with grammar.
- ☐ I find formatting my document very frustrating.
- ☐ I feel that the APA rules conflict one another.
- ☐ I'm unsure about how to format direct quotations.
- ☐ I don't know how to properly format tables or figures.
- ☐ I am frustrated every time I try to create a linked table of contents.
- ☐ My biggest struggles are with minor details.

Advanced editing

- ☐ My paragraphs tend to be a page or longer.
- ☐ My sentences often take up more than three lines of text — run-on sentences.
- ☐ My paragraphs are too short.
- ☐ I have problems with transitions.
- ☐ I don't understand the difference between primary and secondary sources.
- ☐ I just need some help with scholarly style.
- ☐ I need someone to verify that the sources in my bibliography actually exist.
- ☐ I don't really understand my institution's guides — what do they actually mean?
- ☐ Everything feels disjointed.
- ☐ My chapter 3 says one thing about my methodology and chapter 4 seems to describe something else.
- ☐ I used a term one way early on and I think it changed meaning later without my noticing.
- ☐ My abstract describes the dissertation I thought I was writing, not the one I wrote.
- ☐ My document reads like it was written by three different people at three different times.

Writing cycle coach

- ☐ I sometimes have problems with writer's block.
- ☐ I am often uncertain as to what my next step in the process should be.
- ☐ I never outline.
- ☐ I am having trouble finding appropriate research.
- ☐ I don't understand the term alignment as it pertains to my research questions.
- ☐ My thesis/dissertation is already at least one term behind schedule.
- ☐ I have been stuck on the same milestone for more than two months.
- ☐ My timeline has not proven realistic, and others are pulling ahead of me.
- ☐ I am having trouble organizing my literature review.

- ☐ My dissertation chair or mentor keeps repeating the same advice.
- ☐ My Chair keeps making the same kind of comment on different chapters.
- ☐ I am not sure my topic actually holds up.
- ☐ I am not sure my methodology really fits my research questions.
- ☐ My research proposal has been rejected more than once.
- ☐ My dissertation chair or mentor's advice doesn't always make sense to me.
- ☐ Readers have adversely commented on my writing style, skills, linearity, or logic.
- ☐ I don't agree with the feedback I'm getting from my reviewers.
- ☐ I find the committee process stressful.
- ☐ I have trouble effectively communicating with my mentor or dissertation chair.
- ☐ I am determined to publish my thesis/dissertation by a certain date.
- ☐ My paragraphs do not express only one concept or idea.
- ☐ My paragraphs seem 'scattered' or non-linear.
- ☐ Linearity, creating a clear narrative throughout, is a challenge.
- ☐ My AI keeps telling me my work is fine, but my Chair disagrees.
- ☐ I have used AI heavily and I no longer know which parts of my argument are actually mine.
- ☐ I cannot tell whether my chapters still fit together after months of separate revisions.

Sherpa

- ☐ My thesis does not make sense.
- ☐ My thesis does not make sense to my Chair.
- ☐ I have logic issues.
- ☐ I have major alignment issues.
- ☐ My chapter 4 results do not seem to support what chapter 5 concludes.
- ☐ I think there are contradictions built into my draft that I cannot find.
- ☐ My review of literature is a struggle.
- ☐ I need real help with qualitative analysis.
- ☐ My time-to-degree limit is approaching.
- ☐ I need to be done, and fast.
- ☐ I am having trouble with the time-commitments my doctorate requires.
- ☐ I need someone to help me meet my milestones.
- ☐ The cost of my degree is a major concern.
- ☐ My work has been flagged by an AI detector and I did not use AI to write it.
- ☐ I am worried that something in my draft could be treated as academic misconduct.
- ☐ I need a sounding board.
- ☐ I have other problems that aren't on this list that I would like to discuss.

What your ticks mean

Basic editing — the AI setup is free; only the final human review is billed, and it is a few hours.

Advanced editing — addressable on your own, but it takes longer to learn than most candidates expect.

Writing cycle coach — unless you have a *lot* of time for learning, ticks here mean it is time to get help.

Sherpa — any tick at all in this category means it is time to contact us.

