Outstanding

Very organized and well written; the writing is clear, concise, critical, persuasive, and compelling; is focused, coherent, and organized around a major theme or question; is original and significant; expresses new and independent ideas; addresses a very important issue or answers a long-standing question; shows a deep understanding of the literature and the gaps in the field; has well-planned and well- performed experiments; uses or develops new tools, methods, approaches, or new types of analyses; the experiments are brief and very well described; has a large quantity of high quality data; the data are extremely clear; has a very significant new discovery; the conclusion ties the whole thing together; has an impact on theory; opens up a new area for research; will move the field in a new direction.

Very good

Solid, yeoman-like work; has an argument; is well written, well organized, and broad in scope; is original and significant but less so; the quality of the science is good; demonstrates understanding of all aspects of the subject; has a novel, timely question or may look at an old question with a new approach or a new analytical method; makes a prediction; uses appropriate techniques and analyses; has all the right controls; the data are very well done; provides solid answers; may confirm an already known answer; will not necessarily have a huge impact on the field.

Acceptable

Workman-like; student has done a significant amount of solid work reasonably well; well written, well organized but is a chore to read; is original but not very original and not very exciting; has a few innovative things but little in the way of publishable data; the science is acceptable but is not particularly good science; the concepts are derivative; set up a problem and answers the question, but the question is not exciting; the literature review is adequate; shows acquaintance with the key papers but does not really discuss what is important about them; is technically adequate; uses good scientific methods; the experiments are reasonably well done; has all the right controls; produces some novel data; adds data to an existing hypothesis; the results are useful but not exciting; may confirm what is already known; is not a particularly meaningful contribution; is not going to have a great impact on the field.

Unacceptable

The quality of the science is not good; shows a lack of depth of understanding of the project; does not make an original contribution; the writing is bad, has no storyline or argument, has spelling and grammatical errors; does not have a good question; the experiments are poorly done and poorly analyzed; the quality of the data collection and statistical analyses is poor; may have engaged in unethical behavior; the data are false or fudged; the data are not interpreted well; makes too much of the results; draws invalid conclusions from the data; does not (cannot) explain what has been done or what it all means.

Adapted from Lovitts, B.E. (2007). Making the Implicit Explicit.