Thesis Critique

**Overall**

What precisely is the focus of the research?  
- What is the specific objective or aim?  
- Why is investigating this topic worthwhile?  
- How will this be achieved?  
- What concepts are key and how have they been defined?  
- How does the structure of the inquiry relate to the structure of the thesis (and chapters)?  
- Why do the results of this study matter? In other words, what is the overall argument of the thesis?

**Literature**

- coverage: accurate and inclusive representation of relevant material;  
- demonstrating engagement with up-to-date literature on the research topic;  
- working understanding: a familiarity that demonstrates, at a minimum, a reasonable level of analysis and synthesis;  
- critical appraisal: weighing up the body of knowledge;  
- connection to findings: demonstrating a disciplinary perspective; weaving the literature into the study.

**Getting Going**

* Writing a title and subtitle to focus the research area and the topic;
* Identifying the boundaries of the research areas and the gaps in the field by asking questions, such as: Who are the main theorists in the field? Are their theories/ ideas/ hypotheses different? Why? Which theories/ theorists will students use to back their project, and why?
* Ensuring you have many opportunities to talk with peers and to present their thinking informally in the early stages of the doctorate; this can help to clarify the research topic.

**Key Thesis Websites**

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills>

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/goodpractice/about/>

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/time>

<http://www.ox.ac.uk/students/academic/guidance/skills/research>

<https://weblearn.ox.ac.uk/portal/hierarchy/skills/plag>