What to expect from the thesis

The University of Melbourne requires all theses to be of international standard. With approval from their department, University of Melbourne candidates are permitted to submit a creative work with a dissertation to fulfil the requirements of the degree. The volume of work of a research masters thesis which includes a creative work would normally be the equivalent to 40,000 words.

Where the thesis comprises a dissertation and creative work, both must be passed in order for the candidate to be awarded the degree.

What should the thesis demonstrate?

The MPhil or Masters by Research degree signifies that the holder has undertaken independent and sustained research conducted and reported by the holder under proper academic supervision and in a research environment for the prescribed period. The University of Melbourne requires research topics that can realistically be completed in 18 months to 2 years full-time. This may affect the nature and length of a thesis.

Your examination should consider the candidate’s thesis solely on its merits as an independent piece of supervised research appropriate for a masters level. This should be irrespective of whether you consider the approach to be outside of the established research paradigm for the discipline, and irrespective of whether you would have taken the same approach to the research.

Format

All theses must be presented as a unified whole and address a significant research question. The University of Melbourne allows graduate researchers to include publications written during their candidature as part of their thesis, provided they are the primary author. The publication status (if any) will be clearly acknowledged in the preface.

The creative work may take the form of a performance, exhibition, writing (poetry, fiction, script or other written literary forms), music composition, design, film, video, website, multimedia or other New Media technologies and modes of presentation. The creative work must be comprehensively documented and either the documentation or the creative work itself submitted with the dissertation.

Relationship between the Dissertation and Creative Work

The dissertation and the creative work should be considered as complementary, mutually reinforcing parts of a single project. The candidate may argue, however, that the relationship between the two parts contributes to the originality and creativity of the whole. In the Master of Music (Research) in Composition the dissertation may address an approved research topic independent of the creative work.

The dissertation is required to do more than simply describe the creative work and how it was undertaken. While it will often include information on the materials and methodology used and elucidate the creative work and place it in an artistic, intellectual and/or cultural context, the dissertation must answer to the requirement of every research masters thesis that it makes an independent contribution to existing scholarship in the field.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree (Discipline)</th>
<th>Dissertation</th>
<th>Creative Work</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPhil, Master of Fine Arts and Masters by Research (any discipline not specified below)</td>
<td>Must be at least 10,000 words*&lt;br&gt;Minimum of 25% weighting</td>
<td>Maximum of 75% weighting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Music (Composition)</td>
<td>Only required if minor folio of works is submitted. 50% weighting.</td>
<td>A folio of works (50-60 minutes in duration) consisting of:&lt;br&gt;- A minimum of two original compositions in different media, and&lt;br&gt;- A recording of a performance of at least one work written during the period of candidature&lt;br&gt;The folio should demonstrate the full range of the candidate’s musical voice. To this end, it will typically include pieces for different instrumental and vocal forces. It should contain at least one substantial work (for an ensemble of 12 or more independent lines) and at least one sustained work (15 minutes or more in duration).&lt;br&gt;100% weighting&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;A minor folio of works (25-30 minutes in duration). 50% weighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Music (Interactive Composition)</td>
<td>Only required if minor folio of works is submitted. 50% weighting.</td>
<td>A folio made up of 60 minutes of music and sound-based creative work with other media.&lt;br&gt;100% weighting&lt;br&gt;OR&lt;br&gt;A minor folio. 50% weighting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Music (Jazz and Improvisation)</td>
<td>Related written project.</td>
<td>A live performance or recording of a performance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Music (Music Performance)</td>
<td>8-10,000 words*</td>
<td>A recording of a live public recital consisting of at least 70 minutes of repertoire.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Master of Music (Musicology/Ethnomusicology)</td>
<td>A critical study of between 10,000-20,000 words* on the music edited</td>
<td>A transcription and edition of a substantial body of music.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Word length includes footnotes but excludes words in tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

You can view the specific requirements of a particular degree in [The University of Melbourne Handbook](#).
Examination process

**Relevant Policies of the Academic Board**

- Graduate Research Training Policy (MPF1321) [https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1321](https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1321)
- Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy (MPF1318) [https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1318](https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1318)

**Parties involved in the examination process**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Responsibilities</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Examiners</strong></td>
<td>At least two independent external experts. Examiners from the University of Melbourne are not permitted. &lt;br&gt;At least one examiner resident outside the state of Victoria. &lt;br&gt;Should have no conflict of interest of a personal, professional or commercial nature with the candidate, the supervisors and/or The University of Melbourne in the last five years, or in the near future. &lt;br&gt;Candidates are not permitted to know the identities of their examiners until the examination is complete. Your identity will then only be released to the candidate if you agree or if required under Australian Freedom of Information legislation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chair of Examiners</strong></td>
<td>The Head of Department or their nominee; cannot be the candidate’s supervisor. &lt;br&gt;Does not submit a report or a have a vote in deciding the outcome of the examination. &lt;br&gt;Makes recommendations to the Chair of the Higher Degrees Research Committee. &lt;br&gt;May act as a conduit between examiner, supervisors and candidate if the examiner requires additional information (for example, advice on the thesis under consideration and its content, or requests for additional written clarification). &lt;br&gt;Will attend any performance or exhibition and be responsible for maintaining the confidentiality of the examination by ensuring there is no inappropriate contact between you and the candidate, their supervisors and/or other examiners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chair of Higher Degrees Research Committee</strong></td>
<td>Final statutory approver for examinations. &lt;br&gt;Approver for any exceptional requests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Graduate Research Examination Office</strong></td>
<td>Main administrative contact point. &lt;br&gt;Has delegated authority from the Academic Registrar and Chair of Higher Degrees Research Committee in all but exceptional cases.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faculty Graduate Research Administrators</strong></td>
<td>Administrative contact point for the arrangement of performances, exhibitions and related travel.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Supervisor/s</strong></td>
<td>May initially contact the examiners to ascertain interest/availability but then no further contact is permitted until after the examination has been finalised.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What do examiners need to do?**

You will normally be provided with an electronic copy of the dissertation and where possible of the creative work or additional documentation, such as a video of a performance. Until the final thesis is released by the University of Melbourne, it is confidential. Please do not share or distribute these to any third party or release them publicly under any circumstance. It is also not permitted for you to submit the thesis through similarity checking software. Instead you should refer any concerns about authorship integrity to gr-exams@unimelb.edu.au.

The examination process does not normally include visiting examiners or a viva voce. However, where the creative work includes a performance or exhibition of visual art works, you may be required to travel to the site of...
the performance or exhibition. In this situation, if the dissertation is not submitted at or around the same time, you will receive an extended abstract of 1000-3000 words one week prior to the viewing. Once you have reviewed the both the creative work and dissertation, please submit a detailed independent report online and make a recommendation.

Depending on the combined examiners’ recommendations (see below), most examinations are completed without further involvement from the examiners. Where there is a substantial difference of opinion between the examiners, a third external examiner is appointed. The third examiner is not informed that there are extant reports or disagreement. The Chair of Examiners provides advice to the Chair of the Higher Degrees Research Committee based on the majority recommendation of the examiners.

You will be notified in writing once the examination is concluded and are then welcome to contact the candidate, except for matters relating directly to the examination process.

**Qualities to look for in the thesis**

To pass a research master thesis (comprising creative work and dissertation) must:

(a) demonstrate advanced learning in research skills and mastery of appropriate techniques, such as the use of archival or primary evidence, analysis of data, judgement of conflicting evidence;

(b) demonstrate specialist knowledge in the area of research;

(c) demonstrate an understanding of, and commitment to, research ethics and integrity; and

(d) be given an average numerical mark of 65% or greater as defined in the table below.

Where appropriate, please provide your opinion with respect to the following questions:

- Does the candidate show sufficient familiarity with, understanding and critical appraisal of the relevant literature and field of enquiry?
- Does the thesis provide a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the topic?
- Are the methods and techniques adopted appropriate to the subject matter and are they properly justified and applied?
- Are the results suitably set out with adequate exposition and interpretation?
- Are conclusions and implications appropriately developed and clearly linked to the nature and content of the research framework and findings?
- Has/have the research question/questions been tested or explored according to disciplinary norms?
- Is the literary quality and general presentation of the thesis of a suitably high standard?
- Do the creative work and dissertation together constitute an original contribution to knowledge in the subject area?

**Qualities to look for specifically in the Creative Work**

Where appropriate, provide your opinion with respect to the following questions:

- Does the creative work demonstrate a professional level of familiarity with and understanding of contemporary work in the field?
- Does the creative work demonstrate a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the artistic form and creative content?
- Are the methods and techniques applied in the execution of the work are appropriate to the subject matter and are original and/or aesthetically effective?
- Is the creative work is presented in a sufficiently professional manner?
- Does the creative work demonstrate a sufficiently high standard of literary, visual, digital, musical or performance literacy and quality?
- Has/have the research question/s been identified and tested through the creative work?
- Is the documentation of the work, (including catalogue/program material where appropriate) sufficiently thorough and of a standard that will ensure the work provides a reference for subsequent researchers?
- Is the interface between the creative work and the dissertation appropriate and substantiated? (This may not apply for MMus Composition where permission has been granted for the submission of a major folio alone).

You may ask for the creative work to be re-presented or re-documented if it does not meet the above criteria.
The numeric mark
You will be asked to provide a numeric mark in the range 0-100 on the online form (not in your written report).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark</th>
<th>Grade</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>90-100%</td>
<td>Outstanding (H1)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated a very high level of competence with respect to the questions listed above AND there is clear evidence of considerable original work of high quality, including analysis or other evaluation, and the research, implementation or experimentation phases of the discovery have also been substantially completed, with an expectation that the thesis would be worthy of publication with only a small amount of revision and/or editing required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>85-89%</td>
<td>Excellent (H1)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated a high level of competence with respect to the questions listed above AND there is clear evidence of considerable original work, including analysis or other evaluation, and the implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have also been substantially completed, with an expectation that with a small amount of further research and/or analysis the thesis would be worthy of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-84%</td>
<td>Very good (H1)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated more than adequate level of competence with respect to the questions listed above AND the thesis provides evidence of the candidate’s ability to synthesise and organise existing information in a useful and critical manner and is well-written and largely free of error OR there is evidence of original work, including analysis or other evaluation, and the implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have also been substantially completed, with an expectation that with a small amount of further research and/or analysis the thesis would be worthy of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>75-79%</td>
<td>Good (H2A)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated a minimum level of competence with respect to the questions listed above AND the thesis provides evidence of the candidate’s ability to synthesise and organise existing information in a useful and critical manner and is well-written and largely free of error OR there is evidence of original work, including analysis or other evaluation, and some amount of research, with an expectation that with research and/or analysis the thesis might be worthy of publication.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-74%</td>
<td>Satisfactory (H2B)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated a minimum level of competence with respect to the questions listed above AND the thesis is judged to be more than adequate in at least one of the questions listed above OR there is evidence of original work, including some analysis or other evaluation of the proposal, even if not fully implemented or tested.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>65-69%</td>
<td>Adequate (H3)</td>
<td>The candidate has demonstrated a minimum level of competence with respect to the criteria for examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-64%</td>
<td>Inadequate</td>
<td>The thesis is deficient with respect to one or more of the criteria for examination and resubmission of the thesis in a revised form is required for re-examination.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-49%</td>
<td>Failed</td>
<td>The thesis is so deficient with respect to one or more of the criteria for examination that revision and resubmission cannot be considered as an option.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Your report

In addition to the numeric mark, please submit a report reflecting your assessment of the appropriate outcome for the examination and giving feedback to the candidate to guide them, if applicable, in making changes to the dissertation and/or creative work to ensure it is of the highest possible standard. As a guide we would ask for your report to be at least one full page including comments on both the strengths and weaknesses of the work examined.

You may wish to structure your report around the questions above, or another format you feel is appropriate. You may also wish to provide suggestions for potential publishable content and/or a list of errata. We would welcome any other comments of a general nature that may be of assistance to the Higher Degrees by Research Committee, the candidate and/or the supervisors.

We will release as much of your report to the candidate as possible, but your name will not be released until the examination is completed (if you agree to this). Please use a blank document which does not reveal your identity to create your report. Submit any material you don’t want to be released to the candidate in a clearly marked separate document.

To maintain confidentiality of the examination, submit your report to the Examinations Office via the online form only, and not to any other person. If you have any questions about the online Thesis Examination System, please review the Frequently Asked Questions, or contact the Graduate Research Examinations Office.

Result

You will be asked to select one of the following recommendations for the thesis:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>You recommend the candidate should</th>
<th>When to use</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. be awarded the degree without further examination or amendment required by me. | - There are no errors or omissions that need amendment  
- The award can be made credibly on the work as presented  
- Your report may include a list of suggested amendments for publishing the material. |
| 2. be awarded the degree without further examination, subject to inserting in the thesis the minor corrections and/or additions as I have specified to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners, without further reference to me. | - You detect only minor problems such as inconsistencies in terminology, ambiguities in text or figures, referencing problems, or errors in orchestration or instrumental or vocal technique.  
- The issues are not specific to the field under consideration so the Chair of Examiners can determine whether the candidate’s corrections adequately comply with your notes.  
- Examiners often make this recommendation where they take issue with the candidate’s subject-specific interpretations but accept the validity of a divergent view.  
- Your report may include criticisms for the candidate to consider before submitting the material for (further) publication. |
| 3a*. be awarded the degree subject to revising part or parts of the thesis as I have specified to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners, without further reference to me. | - Lapses in coherence or logic require sections of the thesis to be rewritten (not just corrections to small sections).  
- The problems do not affect the substantive merit and/or conclusions of the work.  
- You believe compliance can be determined by the Chair of Examiners. |
| 3b*. be awarded the degree subject to revising part or parts of the thesis as I have specified, and subject to my satisfaction | - As per Recommendation 3a, but you believe the Chair of Examiners may not be able determine compliance because the changes may impact on subject-specific interpretations. |

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4*</td>
<td>not yet be awarded the degree subject to revising part or parts of the thesis as I have specified, and subject to my satisfaction.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5*</td>
<td>not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to submit for re-examination.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The thesis contains flaws that affect its substantive merit and/or conclusions and render it inadequate for the award of the degree.
- With additional specified rewriting or work the thesis could potentially fulfil the requirements of the degree.
- The original examiners must re-examine the revised thesis if possible.
- Examiners of a revised and resubmitted thesis will be provided with the reports of all original examiners for their reference.
- The thesis has substantive, irredeemable flaws in scholarship or logic that render it inadequate for the award of the degree.

**Time for examination**

Please complete your examination within six weeks of receiving the final component (whether creative work or dissertation). The dissertation will be sent to you a maximum of six months after a performance or exhibition along with any additional documentation, such as a video of the performance.

We will send you a reminder one week before your report is due. If you find yourself unable to complete the examination within this period, please let the Graduate Research Examinations Office know immediately and provide an estimate of when you expect you will be able to do so. The Higher Degrees by Research Committee may choose to appoint an alternative examiner if you are unable to complete your examination within eight weeks of receiving the thesis.

**Payment**

The University of Melbourne will pay you an honorarium for each examination when we have received:
- your recommendation, numeric mark and detailed written report
and one of
- your completed *External Examiner Payment Request* online form
or
- your completed Western Union online form.