

Information for Examiners of MPhil and Masters by Research Theses



The University of Melbourne offers degrees by research across a wide range of disciplines. It expects theses to be of international standard and demonstrate the candidate has undertaken an independent and sustained piece of research that could reasonably be expected to be achievable in 18 months to 2 years.

What we ask of you

We ask you to consider the candidate's thesis 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 the established research paradigm for the discipline, and irrespective of whether you would have taken the same approach to the research.

Once you have reviewed the thesis, please provide a report that addresses the criteria for examination and recommend a result chosen from the options below and a numeric mark. Examination reports generally set out an account of the examiner's understanding of the research undertaken as well as give feedback on specific details. Reports are typically 2 to 8 pages long (minimum one page). Reports often contain suggested amendments for further publication of the research, but that don't need to be addressed for the thesis to pass the examination. There is no oral examination component for research masters degrees at the University of Melbourne.

Criteria for examination

To be awarded a pass, a MPhil or Masters by Research thesis must:

- (a) demonstrate the candidate's command and critical assessment of a complex body of knowledge in the area of their research
- (b) demonstrate the candidate's independence of thought and approach
- (c) demonstrate that the methods and techniques used are appropriate; and demonstrate an understanding of their principles, strengths and limitations
- (d) demonstrate that the candidate has made a contribution to knowledge within their field, with research objectives tested or explored according to disciplinary norms
- (e) demonstrate the candidate's ability to effectively communicate original research findings to appropriate professional, academic and industry audiences
- (f) demonstrate the candidate's understanding of, and commitment to, research ethics and integrity
- (g) form a careful, rigorous and cohesive piece of research; and
- (h) be given an average numerical mark of 65 percent or greater as defined below.

Numeric mark

You will be asked to recommend a numerical mark as defined below.

90-100%	Outstanding (M1) , when • A very high level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; and • There is clear evidence of considerable original work of high quality, including analysis or other evaluation; • The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially complete; • The thesis is worthy of publication with only a small amount of revision and/or editing required.
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85-89%	Excellent (M1A), when • A high level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; and • There is clear evidence of considerable original work, including analysis or other evaluation. • The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially completed. • The thesis is worthy of publication with a small amount of further research and/or analysis.
80-84%	Very good (M1B), when • More than adequate level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; 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 free of error; OR • There is evidence of original work, including analysis or other evaluation. • The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially completed. • The thesis is worthy of publication with a small amount of further research and/or analysis.
75-79%	Good (M2A), when • A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination, 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 further research or analysis the thesis might be worthy of publication.
70-74%	Satisfactory (M2B), when • A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination, and • The thesis is more than adequate in at least one of the examination criteria; OR • There is evidence of original work, including some analysis or other evaluation of the proposal, even if not fully implemented or tested.
65-69%	Adequate (M3), when • A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination.
0-64%	Fail (MF), when • The thesis is deficient with respect to one or more of the criteria for examination.

Thesis formats and lengths

The thesis must be presented as a unified whole and address a significant research question. Published work based on research conducted during candidature may be included within the thesis, provided the candidate has clearly articulated their significant individual contribution to and the status of any publication the preface.

The maximum allowed thesis length is 50,000 words. Typical expectations for the length of theses (including footnotes but not words in tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices) are as follows:

- MPhil and Masters by Research (Thesis only): 40,000 words
- Masters by Research (Advanced Seminars & Shorter Thesis): 20,000–22,000 words (75% of the assessment of the degree).

Confidentiality and research integrity

You will be provided with an electronic copy of the thesis. These are confidential documents that must not be shared with any third party or submitted through similarity checking or generative AI software. If you have any concerns about authorship integrity, please contact the Examinations Office (gr-exams@unimelb.edu.au). Note that all Melbourne theses are checked for plagiarism using similarity-detection tools prior to submission.

All contact in relation to the examination must be through the Examinations Office. Please submit your report to the Examinations Office via the [Thesis Examination System \(TES\)](#) online form only, and not to any other person. You should submit any material that you don't want released to the candidate in a clearly marked separate document.

Do not contact supervisors or the candidate during the examination. If they contact you, please advise the Examinations Office.

Timing

Please complete your examination within six weeks of receiving the thesis. We will send you a reminder two weeks before your report is due. If you find yourself unable to complete the examination within this time, please let the Graduate Research Examinations Office know as soon as you can and provide an estimate of when you will be able to submit your report. In the absence of prior agreement, the University may choose to appoint an alternative examiner if you are unable to submit your report within eight weeks of receiving the thesis.

What happens next

Most examinations are completed without further involvement from the examiners. Where there is a substantial difference between recommended marks, you will be provided with your co-examiner's report and asked to reconsider your recommended mark. If after reconsideration the examiners' recommendations cannot be reconciled, consensus will be sought via moderation with the chair of examiners. If examiners cannot reach consensus, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for graduate research may appoint an adjudicator.

Honoraria

Once each examination is complete, the University of Melbourne will pay you an honorarium. To receive it, you need to provide your payment details via the Thesis Examination System External Examiner form.

Resources

- Thesis Examination System [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Graduate Research Training Policy (MPF1321) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1321>
- Preparation of Graduate Research Theses Process <https://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/processes/preparation-of-graduate-research-theses>
- Responsible Conduct of Research Policy (MPF1318) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1318>
- Authorship Policy (MPF1181) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1181>
- Statement on text recycling and self-plagiarism in research: <https://research.unimelb.edu.au/strengths/ethics/text-recycling-and-self-plagiarism-in-research>
- Degree requirements can be found in the University Handbook <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au>