

Information for Examiners of MPhil and Masters by Research Theses That Include Creative Works



The University of Melbourne expects theses to be of international standard and demonstrate the candidate has undertaken an independent and sustained piece of research which could reasonably be expected to be achievable in 18 months to 2 years. Where the thesis comprises a dissertation and creative work, both must be passed for the candidate to be awarded the degree.

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.

Some of the work in this thesis was undertaken while **Melbourne experienced major and extended restrictions during the COVID pandemic**. Whilst our high expectations of standards and scale of research theses are not modified by the COVID constraints, some of our graduate researchers may have significantly altered or adapted their research plan in order to progress. As examiner, this may mean in some cases the thesis you examine is not typical for your discipline. Where appropriate, we have encouraged candidates to discuss any methodological adjustments made in the COVID context and explain how adaptations arose because of the disruptions, to guide your understanding of the work presented and the constraints under which it was undertaken. The candidate's commentary relating to future research directions may reflect some aspects of work which could not be pursued given the COVID circumstances. These Melbourne circumstances have included intermittent 'lockdowns' between March 2020 and November 2021, research facility closure or limited access during this entire period, along with closure of national and internal borders precluding some field or collaborative work.

You may be required to travel only if the creative work includes a performance or exhibition of visual art works. If the dissertation is not submitted at or around the same time, you will receive an abstract of 1000-3000 words one week prior to the viewing. Once you have reviewed both the creative work and dissertation, please provide a report which addresses the criteria for examination and recommend a result chosen from the options below and a numeric mark. Examination reports generally set out a brief account of the examiner's understanding of the research undertaken and are at least one page long. Reports often contain suggested amendments for further publication of the research, but which don't need to be addressed for the thesis to pass the examination. There is no oral examination component at the University of Melbourne.

Criteria for examination

According to the University's rules, a MPhil or Masters by Research thesis 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 their 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 to be awarded a pass.

Theses containing creative works must also:

- (a) demonstrate a professional level of familiarity with, and understanding of, contemporary work in the field;
- (b) demonstrate a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the artistic form and creative content;
- (c) apply methods and techniques in the execution of the work that are appropriate to the subject matter and are original and/or aesthetically effective;
- (d) be presented in a sufficiently professional manner;
- (e) demonstrate a sufficiently high standard of literary, visual, digital, musical or performance literacy and quality;
- (f) identify the research questions and test these through the creative work;
- (g) provide sufficiently thorough documentation of the work, (including catalogue/program material where appropriate) that is of a standard that ensures the work provides a reference for subsequent researchers;
- (h) constitute a substantive original contribution to knowledge in the subject area through the creative work and the dissertation together; and,
- (i) demonstrate an appropriate and substantiated interface between the creative work and the dissertation.

You may ask for the creative work to be re-presented or re-documented if it does not meet the above criteria.

Possible Outcomes

You will be asked to recommend a result for the thesis from the following alternatives:

1	Pass No changes required; or only minor edits required, such as typographical errors, formatting issues or other corrections that have no bearing on the quality of the overall argument. The Chair of Examiners verifies the edits have been addressed.
2	Pass with revision (Chair of Examiners) Minor revisions to content are required. In this case, Examiners must provide an enumerated list and explanation of each required revision. These revisions will be reviewed and verified by the Chair of Examiners who may consult the Examiner to verify the changes.
3	Revise, resubmit and regrade (Examiner) Serious shortcomings in the content of the thesis are present but can be resolved with major revision. Examiners must provide an enumerated list and explanation of the required changes. The revised thesis is returned to the Examiner to consider, and the Examiner regrades the thesis accordingly. A thesis submitted for regrading may only be awarded a result of 1, 2 or 4.
4	Fail The thesis has serious irredeemable flaws and is not of a standard to be awarded the degree.

Numeric mark

90-100%	Outstanding (H1), when <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A very high level of competence demonstrated; 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 been substantially completed, with an expectation that the thesis would be worthy of publication only a small amount of revision or editing required.
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85-89%	Excellent (H1), when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high level of competence demonstrated; 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 the thesis would be worthy of publication with a small amount of further research or analysis.
80-84%	Very good (H1), when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More than adequate level of competence demonstrated; 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, and the implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have also been substantially completed. • The thesis would be worthy of publication with a small amount of further research and/or analysis.
75-79%	Good (H2A), when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum level of competence demonstrated, 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 (H2B), when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum level of competence demonstrated, 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 (H3), when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination.
50-59%	Inadequate, when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.
0-49%	Failed, when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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.

Thesis formats, lengths and weightings

The volume of work of a research masters thesis which includes a creative work would normally be equivalent to a written thesis of 40,000 words. The dissertation component of the thesis cannot be less than 25% of the work (10,000 words), unless specified for a particular course and discipline in the University Handbook <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au>.

The dissertation and the creative work should be considered as complementary, mutually reinforcing parts of a single project addressing a significant research question. In some cases it may be argued that the relationship between the two parts contributes to the originality and creativity of the whole. In the Master of Music (Research) composition stream the dissertation may address an approved research topic independent of the creative work. The creative work must be comprehensively documented and either the documentation or the creative work itself submitted with the dissertation.

Some Music candidates may choose to produce a major folio (50-60 minutes of music). The folio is a collection of musical pieces that will normally take the form of written scores, but may also include material in other formats such as: works for fixed media such as audio CD, DVD, film, video; interactive software systems, or other forms of digital encoding. The folio will include a table of contents and any additional media included. The works must be

comprehensively documented with full instructions for their performance or other realisation. The folio may also include a brief introductory essay on the works; however, this does not constitute part of the candidate's research and is not separately assessable.

The dissertation must 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 place the creative work in an artistic, intellectual or cultural context; the dissertation must make an independent contribution to existing scholarship. Published work based on research conducted during candidature may be included within the dissertation, provided the candidate is the primary author. The status of any publication will be set out in the preface.

Confidentiality and research integrity

You will normally be provided with an electronic copy of the dissertation and of the creative work or documentation of the creative work. Some creative works may be sent in hard copy to you. These are confidential documents which should not be shared with any third party or submitted through similarity checking software. If you have any concerns about authorship integrity, please contact the Examinations Office (gr-exams@unimelb.edu.au).

To maintain confidentiality of the examination, please submit your report to the Examinations Office via the [Thesis Examination System \(TES\)](#) online form only, and not to any other person.

Your report should not reveal your identity. You should submit any material you don't want released to the candidate in a clearly marked separate document. We will release as much of your report to the candidate as possible, but your name will not be released unless you agree, and then only when the examination process is complete. Most examiners agree to their name being provided to the candidate.

All contact in relation to the examination must be through the Examinations Office. Do not contact supervisors or the candidate. 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 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 as soon as you can and provide an estimate of when you will be able to complete the examination. In the absence of prior agreement, the University may choose to appoint an alternative examiner if you are unable to complete your examination 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 of opinion between the examiners, a third external examiner is appointed. The third examiner is not informed of the previous reports or discrepancy. The examination outcome is determined by the majority recommendation of the examiners.

If you have recommended a result of 3, the revised thesis will be returned to you. Candidates have only one opportunity to revise the thesis. You will be invited to make one of three recommendations: 1, 2 or 4 (as above).

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 Payment form or your completed Convera online form.

Resources

- Thesis Examination System [Frequently Asked Questions](#)
- Graduate Research Training Policy (MPF1321) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1321>
- Preparation of Graduate Research Theses Rules <http://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/preparing-my-thesis/writing-the-thesis>
- Research Integrity and Misconduct Policy (MPF1318) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1318>
- Authorship Policy (MPF1181) <https://policy.unimelb.edu.au/MPF1181>
- Degree requirements can be found in the University Handbook <https://handbook.unimelb.edu.au>