

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



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. Where the thesis comprises a dissertation and creative output, 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.

You may be required to travel only if the creative output 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 output and dissertation, please provide a report that addresses the criteria for examination 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 in the table below.

Creative outputs included with the thesis must:

- (a) demonstrate a professional level of familiarity with and understanding of contemporary work in the field
- (b) demonstrate a sufficiently comprehensive investigation of the creative form and content
- (c) have applied methods and techniques in the execution of the work that are appropriate to the subject matter and are aesthetically effective
- (d) be presented in a sufficiently professional manner

- (e) demonstrate a sufficiently high standard of artistic and creative work
- (f) identify and test or explore the research objectives
- (g) demonstrate sufficiently thorough documentation of the work (including catalogue/program material where appropriate) to ensure the work provides a reference for subsequent researchers
- (h) together with the dissertation, constitute a substantive contribution to knowledge in the subject area, and
- (i) have an appropriate and substantiated interface between the creative output and the dissertation.

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

## Numeric mark

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

|                |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>90-100%</b> | <b>Outstanding (M1),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A very high level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; and</li> <li>• There is clear evidence of considerable original work of high quality, including analysis or other evaluation;</li> <li>• The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially complete;</li> <li>• The thesis is worthy of publication with only a small amount of revision and/or editing required.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                             |
| <b>85-89%</b>  | <b>Excellent (M1A),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A high level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; and</li> <li>• There is clear evidence of considerable original work, including analysis or other evaluation.</li> <li>• The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially completed.</li> <li>• The thesis is worthy of publication with a small amount of further research and/or analysis.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| <b>80-84%</b>  | <b>Very good (M1B),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More than adequate level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination; and</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• There is evidence of original work, including analysis or other evaluation.</li> <li>• The implementation and experimentation phases of the discovery have been substantially completed.</li> <li>• The thesis is worthy of publication with a small amount of further research and/or analysis.</li> </ul> |
| <b>75-79%</b>  | <b>Good (M2A),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination, and</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• There is evidence of original work, including analysis or other evaluation, and some amount of research,</li> <li>• With further research or analysis the thesis might be worthy of publication.</li> </ul>                                                                                                       |
| <b>70-74%</b>  | <b>Satisfactory (M2B),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination, and</li> <li>• The thesis is more than adequate in at least one of the examination criteria; OR</li> <li>• There is evidence of original work, including some analysis or other evaluation of the proposal, even if not fully implemented or tested.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| <b>65-69%</b>  | <b>Adequate (M3),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minimum level of competence demonstrated with respect to the criteria for examination.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| <b>0-64%</b>   | <b>Fail (MF),</b> when <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The thesis is deficient with respect to one or more of the criteria for examination.</li> </ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |

## Thesis formats, lengths and weightings

The volume of work of a research masters thesis that includes a creative output 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 output should be considered as complementary, mutually reinforcing parts of a single project addressing a research objective. 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 output. The creative output must be comprehensively documented and either the documentation or the creative output 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 output and how it was undertaken. While it will often include information on the materials and methodology used and place the creative output 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 output or documentation of the creative output. Some creative outputs may be sent in hard copy to you. These are confidential documents that should 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](mailto: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.

You should submit any material that you don't want released to the candidate in a clearly marked separate document.

All contact in relation to the examination must be through the Examinations Office. 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 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 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 we've received your recommendation and detailed report, 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.

### 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>