What to expect from the thesis

The University of Melbourne requires all theses to be of international standard.

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.

Length of the thesis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Degree</th>
<th>Course Length</th>
<th>Thesis word length*</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MPhil and Masters by Research (Thesis only)</td>
<td>18 months – 2 years full-time or 3-4 years part-time equivalent</td>
<td>30,000 – 40,000 words and may not exceed 50,000 words</td>
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<tr>
<td>Masters by Research (Advanced Seminar &amp; Shorter Thesis)</td>
<td>18 months – 2 years full-time or 3-4 years part-time equivalent</td>
<td>20,000 – 22,000. This represents 75% of the assessment of the degree.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Master of Fine Arts</td>
<td>2 years full-time or 4 years part-time</td>
<td>30,000 to 40,000 words or a thesis comprising a combination of creative work and written component to the equivalent of 40,000 words. The written component must be of at least 25% (10,000 words) of the final submission.</td>
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Questions?: gr-exams@unimelb.edu.au
Last Updated: 23 May 2019
Master of Music

2 years full-time or 4 years part-time

Depending on the discipline and approval of the course coordinator:
30,000 to 40,000 words, or
A folio made up of a minimum of two original compositions in different media of works (50-60 minutes in duration) and a recording of a performance of at least one work written during candidature, or
A folio made up of 60 minutes of music and sound-based creative work with other media, or
A combination of folio and minor thesis, or
A live performance and related written project equivalent to 40,000 works, or
A transcription and edition of a substantial body of music together with a critical study of between 10,000-20,000 words on the music edited; or
A minor thesis of 20,000 to 25,000 words and 3 elective subjects.

Partial or total fulfilment of the degree

The title page of the thesis will indicate whether the thesis is submitted in full or partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree. A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree may be shorter than one submitted for examination by thesis alone. 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

Examiners

- At least two independent external experts. Where possible, original examiners will re-examine the revised and resubmitted thesis.
- 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.
- 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.

*Word length includes footnotes but excludes words in tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices. Special permission, and agreement from examiners, must be sought to exceed 50,000 words.*
What do examiners need to do?
You will normally be provided with an electronic copy of the resubmitted thesis, the examiner reports on the original thesis and the candidate’s list of changes (if provided). Please do not share or distribute any of these confidential documents to any third party or submit the thesis through similarity checking software. Instead you should refer any concerns about authorship integrity to gr-exams@unimelb.edu.au.

We ask that you judge the revised and resubmitted thesis on its merits and re-examine it in its entirety. Once you have reviewed the thesis, submit a detailed independent report online and make a recommendation on the thesis. 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 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.

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?
• 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?
• Does the thesis as a whole constitute an original contribution to knowledge in the subject area?

Your report
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 thesis 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 thesis.
You may wish to structure your report around the questions above, or on a chapter-by-chapter account of the thesis. You may also wish to provide suggestions for potential publishable content and/or a list of errata where appropriate. We would welcome any other comments of a general nature that may be of assistance to the Higher Degrees Research Committee, the candidate and/or the supervisors.

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.** You should 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 resubmitted thesis:

<table>
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<th>You recommend the candidate should</th>
<th>When to use</th>
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| 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 thesis 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, or referencing problems  
• 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. |
| 3 not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to submit for re-examination. | • 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 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 immediately and provide an estimate of when you expect you will be able to do so. The Higher Degrees 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.