

Information for Adjudicators of PhD and Doctoral Examinations



The University of Melbourne offers degrees by research across a wide range of disciplines. It expects theses to be of international standard and to demonstrate that the candidate has undertaken a substantial piece of original research that could reasonably be expected to be achieved in 3 years.

University of Melbourne doctoral theses are examined by two independent leading experts in their fields. In some cases, the examiners' recommended outcomes are inconsistent with each other and one of the examiners has recommended a Fail. When the examiners still do not agree after a moderated conferral, we appoint an adjudicator to provide an overall recommended outcome to our Pro Vice-Chancellor for graduate research, who then uses this recommendation to make a final determination.

What we ask of you

We ask you to consider the criteria for examination and possible outcomes below, the examiners' reports, and the thesis, and use these to recommend an overall outcome. Our advice to examiners can be found at: <https://gradresearch.unimelb.edu.au/staff#examiner-information>.

The role of an adjudicator is to:

- assess the causes and nature of the disagreement between the examiners' reports,
- evaluate the justifications provided in the examiners' reports and consider whether they are valid, reasonable, and proportionate, and
- review relevant sections of the thesis as needed to assess the examiners' reports.

When you have completed these steps, please:

- recommend an overall outcome from the alternatives below, and
- provide a short report stating this overall outcome and explaining your recommendation.

Your report should only address matters arising from consideration of the examiners' reports. It is not a fresh examination of the thesis. Your recommendation should not be influenced by whether you would have taken a different approach to the research, or that you might consider the approach used to be outside the established research paradigm for the discipline.

Your involvement in the examination of the thesis is complete once your report is submitted. However, the Pro Vice-Chancellor for graduate research may seek further clarification after considering your report.

Criteria for examination

To be awarded a pass, a PhD or Doctoral thesis must:

- a) demonstrate the candidate's command and critical assessment of a substantial and complex body of knowledge at the forefront of their field
- b) demonstrate that the methods and techniques used are appropriate; and demonstrate an understanding of their principles, strengths and limitations
- c) demonstrate that the candidate has generated original knowledge that makes a significant contribution to their field, in which the research objectives are tested or explored according to disciplinary norms
- d) demonstrate the candidate's independence of thought and approach
- e) demonstrate the candidate's ability to effectively communicate original research findings to appropriate professional, academic and industry audiences, and in national and international contexts

- f) demonstrate the candidate's understanding of, and commitment to, research ethics and integrity
- g) form a careful, rigorous and cohesive piece of original research.

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 required changes have been addressed.
2*	Pass with minor 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	Major revision (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 reassesses the thesis accordingly. A thesis submitted for reassessment 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.

Confidentiality and research integrity

You will be provided with an electronic copy of the thesis and examiners' reports. 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).

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.

Do not contact the examiners, supervisors or the candidate during the examination. If they contact you, please advise the Examinations Office. Note that the candidate will not be provided with your report.

Timing

Please complete your report within four 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 adjudication within this time, please let the 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 adjudicator if you are unable to submit your report within six weeks of receiving the thesis and examiners' reports.

Honoraria

Once your adjudication 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.

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>