

Information for Adjudicators of MPhil and Masters by Research 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 an independent and sustained piece of research that could reasonably be expected to be achieved in 18 months to 2 years.

University of Melbourne MPhil and Masters by Research theses are examined by two independent leading experts in their fields. In some cases, the examiners' recommended marks are inconsistent with each other. When the examiners still do not agree after a moderated conferral, we appoint an adjudicator to provide an overall recommended mark 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 grading scale below, the examiners' reports, and the thesis, and use these to recommend an overall mark. 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 mark based on the grading scale 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, an 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 in the grading scale 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.
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.

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>