

# GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF MASTER RESEARCH DEGREES

## DEFINITION OF MASTER RESEARCH DEGREES

### **Master of Applied Research, Master of Research and Master of Research Practice**

The Master of Applied Research, Master of Research and Master of Research Practice are AQF Level 9 degrees with the objective of training the candidate in the application and critical evaluation of research methods and methodology through the conduct of a specified program of research under appropriate supervision. The thesis for the Master of Applied Research, Master of Research and Master of Research Practice is expected to be no more than 50,000 words (and normally in the range of 25,000-50,000 words).

### **Masters by Research**

The Masters by Research degree is an AQF Level 9 degree which has the objective of training the candidate in the application and critical evaluation of research methods and methodology by the conduct of a specified program of research under appropriate supervision. The thesis for a Masters by Research degree is expected to be no more than 60,000 words (and normally in the range of 30,000-60,000 words).

**A Masters degree** is awarded after examiners are satisfied that the candidate has demonstrated:

- A thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research by both a thorough review of the literature and application;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work.

## GRADING OF THESES

The University uses five categories for examiners' recommendations (see Table 1). Examiners are asked to select one category on the form supplied, and to attach a detailed report, elaborating on the selected category, to be seen by the candidate, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

Where a recommendation is made conditional on changes, amendments or requests for elaboration, it is important for the candidate that the specific nature of the changes, amendments, or elaboration be made as clearly as possible in the report.

The Principal Supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate.

It would be of assistance to the University if the recommendation and report could include specific comments on the following:

- To what extent and how the thesis makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject with which it deals;

- Shows that the candidate understands the relationship of the investigation to the wider context of the knowledge in which it belongs;
- The ability of the candidate to survey the relevant literature and to document statements adequately;
- The extent to which the candidate's attitude to their own work and to the work of others is critical and perceptive;
- Whether the literary presentation of the thesis is satisfactory;
- Changes which should be made to the thesis before the degree is awarded.

Table 1 - **Categories for Examiners' Recommendation**

|  |  |
|--|--|
| <i>PASSED without further correction</i>       | This indicates that the thesis is an excellent piece of work, which may be passed unconditionally. (Note: An examiner may note minor areas that would benefit from further editing.)   |
| <i>PASSED subject to minor corrections</i>     | <p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when the examiner considers there to be some relatively minor flaws that need attention but do not detract from the overall quality of the work. This may characteristically entail additional proofing, textual amendments or corrections. The examiner's report indicates the specific corrections required. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>   |
| <i>PASSED subject to substantial amendment</i> | <p><i>As outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners</i></p> <p>This category is used when it is considered that there are one or more areas that require amendment, but that with these amendments the work has sufficient integrity to pass. Characteristically, the amendment(s) will relate to clearly definable sections or elements, which are detailed in the examiner's report. Examiners do not see the thesis again.</p>  |
| <i>DEFERRED</i>                                | <p><i>The candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form</i></p> <p>This category is used where the examiner believes that there is need for a significant revision without which the thesis/work cannot be passed. A deferred result implies that the thesis /work is well-grounded and, with additional work, as indicated, can pass. The specific revisions recommended are detailed in the examiner's report.</p> <p>A thesis/work with a deferred result may be returned to the examiner for re-examination. A re-examined thesis can only be graded as PASS (thesis with no, minor or substantial amendments) or FAIL.</p> |
| <i>FAILED</i>                                  | This result is recommended with the thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.  |

## THESIS QUALITY

In addition to providing their examiners' report, examiners are also asked when examining a Master Degree (Research), to provide a numerical score and honours level assessment (see Table 2). Furthermore, to assess the quality of the thesis and generic attributes.

**Table 2 - Honours Level Assessment**

| Result code | Meaning                      | Grade Result |
|-------------|------------------------------|--------------|
| H1          | First class honours          | 80 -100 %    |
| H2A         | Second class honours, upper  | 70-79%       |
| H2B         | Second class honours, higher | 60-69%       |
| H3          | Third class honours          | 50-59%       |
| N           | Fail                         | 0-49%        |

## CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Graduate Research School (GRS). If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the GRS will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners. Please email [researchexaminations@vu.edu.au](mailto:researchexaminations@vu.edu.au)

To ensure management of perceived and/or objective conflicts of interest during the thesis examination process, when an examiner is nominated, candidates will be provided information on which examiners will be examining their thesis. Examiners, candidates and supervisors are advised that if a perceived or objective conflict of interest emerges during the course of the examination process, they have a responsibility to inform the GRS immediately.