

SCHEDULE 3

HDR THESIS EXAMINATION CRITERIA

1 PURPOSE

To specify the criteria that examiners must use in the examination of HDR (PhD and other research doctorates, Master of Philosophy and Master of Research) thesis components, and the method for determining a final recommended grade for the Master of Research where a third examiner is required.

2 SCHEDULE

Examiners are required to address the following criteria in their assessment of a Doctoral thesis, that it:

- forms a 'distinct' contribution to the knowledge of the subject area;
- affords evidence of originality through the discovery of new facts or by the exercise of independent critical thought;
- is satisfactory as regards its literary presentation; and
- contains a substantial amount of material suitable for publication.

In the case of a creative thesis, examiners are required to address that:

- the dissertation and creative components are appropriately linked;
- the creative component is proficient in its handling of the chosen medium and/or genre, and affords evidence of substantial originality in conception and/or execution
- both components are satisfactory as regards its literary presentation

Examiners are required to address the following criteria in the assessment of a research Master of Philosophy thesis, that it:

- makes a contribution to the knowledge of the subject area by the presentation of new facts;
- demonstrates independent critical ability to evaluate existing material in a new light; and
- is satisfactory as regards its literary presentation.

In the case of a creative thesis, examiners are required to address that:

- the dissertation and creative components are appropriately linked;
- the creative component is proficient in its handling of the chosen medium and/or genre, and affords evidence of substantial originality in conception and/or execution
- both components are satisfactory as regards its literary presentation.

Examiners are required to address the following criteria in the assessment of a Master of Research thesis, that:

- it has adequately delineated the topic of concern by critically reflecting on current research in the relevant field;

- the research undertaken produces empirical outcomes or analytical evaluations that are clearly justified and that respond to or reflect on the relevant literature;
- in the case of creative theses, the creative component is able to sustain critical scrutiny; and
- it is satisfactory as regards its literary presentation.

Additionally Master of Research thesis examiners are asked to provide a percentage score for each thesis, using the following bands and criteria:

85–100%

A thesis at this level:

- clearly and fully outlines its research topic and objectives, explaining and justifying the project in relation to key developments in the field and recent literature;
- clearly and fully outlines and explains the research undertaken, in terms of the methodology chosen and why it was chosen in preference to alternatives;
- draws clear and fully-supported conclusions from the research that allow for critical reflection on the research question, the current status of related research and possible future directions for research; and
- is clearly and cogently structured and well-written, and conforms to disciplinary conventions in terms of its presentation;

A candidate producing work of this quality is capable of going on to original and innovative research and is strongly suited for enrolment in a PhD.

75–84%

A thesis at this level:

- provides a good account of the research objectives in relation to developments in the field and recent literature;
- explains the research undertaken and why a certain methodology was chosen as appropriate;
- draws conclusions that are broadly supported by the research, and that respond clearly to the research question; and
- is clearly structured and written, and conforms to disciplinary conventions in terms of its presentation.

A candidate producing work of this quality is capable of undertaking a PhD.

65–74%

A thesis at this level:

- has a clear research objective informed by developments in the field and recent literature;
- explains its methodology clearly;
- relates its conclusions clearly to the research undertaken; and
- is adequately written, structured and presented.

A candidate working at this level is capable of higher degree research, but not yet at doctoral level.

50-64%

A thesis at this level:

- identifies its research objective;
- has a clear methodology;
- draws conclusions based on the research undertaken; and
- is written and presented adequately.

A student working at this level is not capable of further higher degree research.

Below 50%

The thesis does not meet the standard for the award of the degree.

Use of Panel to determine final recommended grade for a Master of Research

In cases where a third thesis examiner is required to determine the final recommended outcome of a Master of Research Examination, there are three broad options for reconciling the grades and determining a single final recommended grade. They are:

- 1) Averaging the three marks, if the panel believes that the examiner reports all represent a fair assessment of the thesis and there is a clear equivalence between the comments the examiner has given and the grade they have awarded according to this schedule.
- 2) Re-weighting an outlier grade by giving two grades a value of 40% in the final outcome and the outlier 20%. A grade can be re-weighted if there is a demonstrable discrepancy between the comments made and the grade awarded or if one grade is widely inconsistent with the others. In such a case it is important to bear in mind that minority viewpoints can be totally legitimate, and de-valuing a report should be done cautiously and only when the panel believes the minority view is less persuasive than that of the majority; OR
- 3) In exceptional cases, a grade can be discarded, and the result determined by the averaging of the other two grades. This option should only be taken when a report is demonstrably biased or there is a conflict of interest, or a demonstrable failure to critically engage with the thesis.

Note: Master of Research examiners are chosen for their expertise and must be approved by supervisors and Faculties. They must also receive documents briefing them about the degree, as well as a copy of the relevant section of this Schedule. Overriding the report of a duly appointed and briefed examiner is not a step to be taken lightly. The recommendation to TESC that the report of a qualified examiner should be discounted or set aside must be clearly and fully justified.

Master of Research Theses after Revision and Re-Examination

Master of Research thesis are re-examined and the final grade determined in accordance with Schedule 4 of this Policy.

3 NOTES

3.1	Contact Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Higher Degree Research Training and Partnerships)
3.2	Implementation Officer	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Higher Degree Research Training and Partnerships)
3.3	Approval Authority /	Academic Senate (Res no 20/23)

	Authorities	
3.4	Date Approved	7 April 2020
3.5	Date of Commencement	7 April 2020
3.6	Date for Review	April 2023
3.7	Documents Superseded by this Schedule	HDR Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy approved 5 September 2017
3.8	Amendment History	Nil
3.9	Policy Authorisation	HDR Thesis Preparation, Submission and Examination Policy approved Academic Senate 7 April 2020, Res no 20/23