

The purpose of the document is to:

- a) describe the modes of submission available to candidates at RMIT,
- b) explain the criteria to be used when assessing the Masters by Research work and the recommendations available to you as an examiner; and
- c) provides guidance about the structure of your report.

Please complete your examination within six weeks of receiving this document.

Section 1. Criteria for each mode of submission

At RMIT the Masters by research is a two-year, full-time (or part-time equivalent) degree of which two thirds are devoted to research. Candidates complete either a thesis or a project, with or without publications. Candidates who include published material in their work will complete a publication declaration form as part of their submission. The length and format of the thesis/dissertation should be consistent with the normal standards for the discipline/field.

Thesis

The thesis must be unified and coherent in content addressing a single, significant research question/theme.

Project

The project must also address a single, significant research question/theme, comprising the components below, and examiners should treat these components as integral parts of the whole project being examined.

The project will contain:

- i. the artefact(s) and /or body of work presented in an exhibition or performance (visual or sonic); or a visual/sonic record of the artefact(s) or body of work; and,
- ii. a dissertation which defines the purpose and theoretical basis of the work.

An oral presentation made by the candidate, may be agreed to by the candidate and their supervisors in certain disciplines. Supplementary information on project mode examination may be available for specific disciplines.

Section 2. Criteria for examination and consideration of the award

Regardless of mode of submission, in accordance with the Australian Qualifications Framework¹, for the award of a Masters by research the candidate must demonstrate:

- i. a comprehensive understanding of theoretical knowledge and critical reflection on theory and its application;
- ii. an ability to investigate, analyse and synthesise complex information, problems, concepts and theory and to apply established theories to different bodies of knowledge or practice;
- iii. an ability to generate and evaluate complex ideas and concepts at an abstract level;
- iv. the skills to design, use and evaluate research and research methods appropriately;
- v. the communication and technical skills to present a coherent and sustained argument that makes a contribution to knowledge;
- vi. an ethical approach and a high level of research integrity.

Section 3. Initial Classification

An examiner of a revised thesis/project has received the work because the Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Training & Development (ADVC, RT&D) or a College Higher Degrees Examination Advisory Committee has classified it as C3 Revise and Resubmit, on the basis of the examination reports from the initial examination.

This classification means that the candidate's research is not yet of a sufficient standard for the award of the degree but as having the potential to be of this standard. After further research, rewriting, re-organisation, and/or re-conceptualisation as specified by the examiner the candidate resubmits the revised work so they can be re-examined and receive a final classification.

¹ Australian Quality Framework qualifications <http://www.aqf.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2013/05/AQF-Addendum-2014.pdf>

Section 4. Appointment of a new examiner

Occasionally a previous examiner is not available for a re-examination or has chosen not to be involved in any further examination. One or more new examiners are then appointed for the purpose of a re-examination. In addition to receiving a copy of the revised thesis/project, new examiners are also provided the candidate's response to the first examiners' examination reports that details the requirements set by those examiners.

Section 5. Examiner's report

In assessing the research, please complete the Examiner's report form - Masters by Research, recommending a classification and grades against each of the above criteria in (i) - (vi) above. Grades available to examiners are as follows:

- Higher Distinction (80-100%)
- Distinction (70-79%)
- Credit (60-69%)
- Pass (50-59%)
- Fail (<50%)

The individual grade awarded by each examiner will not be disclosed to the candidate. The candidate receives a final grade, derived from a final assessment of the grade in adherence with RMIT's Moderation process.

The grade standards are as follows:

| Grade range | Level | Standard |
|-------------|----------------------|---|
| 80-100% | HD: High Distinction | Work of exceptional quality showing clear understanding of subject matter and appreciation of issues; well formulated; arguments sustained; figures and diagrams where relevant; appropriate literature referenced; strong evidence of creative ability and originality; high level of intellectual work. Excellent analysis, comprehensive research, sophisticated theoretical or methodological understanding, impeccable presentation. The candidate demonstrates outstanding potential for doctoral level study and warrants strong scholarship support. |
| 70-79% | DI: Distinction | Work of high quality showing strong grasp of subject matter and appreciation of dominant issues though not necessarily of the finer points; arguments clearly developed; relevant literature referenced; evidence of creative ability and solid intellectual work. Very good work that is very well researched, shows critical analytical skills, is well argued, with scholarly presentation and documentation. The candidate is capable of doctoral level study. |
| 60-69% | CR: Credit | Work of solid quality showing competent understanding of subject matter and appreciation of main issues though possibly with some lapses and inadequacies and with clearly identifiable deficiencies in logic, presentation or originality. Some evidence of critical analysis and creative ability; well researched, prepared and presented. The candidate may be capable of doctoral level study under close supervision. |
| 50-59% | PA: Pass | Completion of key tasks at an adequate level of performance with demonstrated understanding of key ideas and some analytical skills. Satisfactory presentation, research and documentation. Adequate report, reasonable quality but showing a minimal understanding of the research area with deficiencies in content or experimental rigour; little evidence of creative ability or original thought. The candidate is unlikely to be capable of doctoral level study. |
| 0-49% | NN: Fail | The research does not meet the criteria for the degree as specified by the University and a significant amount of additional research work and/or major substantive revision will not raise it to an acceptable standard. |

Examiners are also asked to prepare a written report indicating whether the criteria have been satisfied and, if not, what amendments are necessary to reach this standard. Please provide the grounds for your recommendation by detailing, as fully as possible, the strengths and weaknesses of the research. This feedback will be used by RMIT to advise the candidate on any amendments needed to improve the research

Section 6. Examiner’s recommendation

After examination the examiner shall make one of the following recommendations:

| Examiner’s Recommendation | Definition |
|---------------------------|--|
| Passed (R1): | The candidate should be awarded the degree with no requirements for amendments other than corrections of an editorial nature. Amendments, if any, to be made within four weeks of classification. |
| Failed (R4): | The candidate should not be awarded the degree. The research does not meet the criteria for the degree as specified by the University. |

Section 7. Integrity of the examination process

During the examination process, there should not be any direct contact between an examiner and the candidate or supervisors. Only the Associate Deputy Vice-Chancellor Research Training & Development (ADVC-RT&D) (or nominee) may communicate with an examiner, and the thesis/project should be treated as a confidential document.

Where an oral presentation or exhibition forms part of the examination, examiners may meet each other and the candidate. This is to enable examiners to experience the examinable work in an appropriate format. No assessment of the work, or opinion about the work’s assessment, may be expressed or discussed in this context.

All examiners are required to submit independent reports and should not consult other examiners other than in exceptional circumstances, either following the approval of, or at the request of, the ADVC-RT&D.

For examinations conducted by written review only, examiners’ names will only be revealed to the candidate after the examination has concluded, if the examiner has given their approval.

Section 8. Classification of thesis/project

The examiners shall individually and independently assess the thesis/project, prepare a brief assessment report for the guidance of the candidate and make a recommendation to the ADVC-RT&D, RMIT.

The ADVC-RT&D will use the Examination classification schedule to determine the examination outcome based on the collective examiners’ recommendations.

Section 9. Process

In order to be awarded the degree, any amendments or revisions made by the candidate must be approved by the Senior/Joint senior supervisor/s and Dean/Head of School or their delegate.