

**VICTORIA UNIVERSITY  
FACULTY OF ARTS, EDUCATION AND HUMAN DEVELOPMENT  
SCHOOL OF PSYCHOLOGY**

**DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY  
(CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY OR CLINICAL NEUROPSYCHOLOGY)**

**GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS**

**Selection of Topic**

The research project reported should be an original empirical study focussed upon a topic with clinical relevance. While the empirical study may not necessarily directly involve study of a population currently receiving clinical services, the results of the project conducted should have implications for some clearly identified aspect of mental health care. It is expected that these implications are explicated and discussed in the thesis. Clearly, a wide range of potential research projects are encompassed by this guideline.

Examples of general topics considered appropriate for investigation include:

- manifest variables relevant to assessment or intervention in the clinical psychology or clinical neuropsychology fields;
- variables relevant to population vulnerabilities and/or preventive measures in a clinical area;
- variables relevant to case management or system management issues in a clinical area;
- or underlying or latent variables relevant to any of the above.

**Scope of Project and Thesis**

The project and thesis are planned and produced within the content of a professional training program in Clinical Psychology or Clinical Neuropsychology. In scope, the project and thesis should be commensurate with the time allowed for research activities in the context of the overall program. Research constitutes one of three strands of the three year Doctor of Psychology course, the other two being theoretical and practicum strands. The Research strand is intended to equal only 33% of a full time study workload across the three years.

**Approach to Research Method**

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are equally acceptable, and sometimes, depending upon the topic under study, both approaches may be used in a complementary way.

What is important is that the thesis presents a clear rationale for whatever methodology has been adopted, and demonstrates that the chosen approach has been applied with appropriate rigor.

**Length and Format of Thesis**

The thesis is to be of a length appropriate to the nature of the study being reported. As the latter is highly variable, due to the range of topics and methodologies acceptable, flexibility has been permitted. The Australian Psychological Society Guidelines, which require the Doctor of Psychology thesis to be of about the same length as a thesis prepared for a Masters Degree by Research, mean that at Victoria University the recommended length is 30,000 to 60,000 words. However, Doctor of Psychology candidates are advised to aim at 30,000 to 40,000 words.

Standard APA format is required and candidates have been advised to present the thesis in a sectionalised form that optimally facilitates easy reading of the work. Normally, the thesis will:

- a) begin with introductory chapters reviewing, by way of critical analysis, the relevant theoretical and empirical literature;
- b) progress to a description of the aims, rationale, conceptualisation and expectations of the study;
- c) move to a description of the methodology employed for data collection and data analysis, together with the rationale for same;
- d) next present the results of the data analysis; and,
- e) finally, discuss the results and their various implications.

Adjustments to this format may of course be justified in terms of optimal clarity of presentation.

## Grading of Theses

The University uses **five** categories for examiners' recommendations. 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 student, supervisor, and Chair of Examiners.

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

### **Categories for examiners' recommendation**

- *PASSED without further examination.*

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]

- *PASSED subject to minor corrections as outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners.*

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.

When this category is recommended, the principal supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate. This is forwarded to the Chair of Examiners. The corrected version is then submitted for classification.

Examiners do not see the thesis again.

- *PASSED subject to substantial amendment as outlined in the examiner's report being made to the satisfaction of the Chair of Examiners.*

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.

When this category is recommended, the principal supervisor oversees corrections and endorses the detailed list of amendments made by the candidate. This is forwarded to the Chair of Examiners. The corrected version is then submitted for classification.

Examiners do not see the thesis again.

- *DEFERRED and the candidate be permitted to resubmit the thesis/work in a revised form.*

A deferred result is recommended when 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.

*A thesis/work with a deferred result is usually returned to the original examiners for re-examination. At that stage, only two categories of result are awarded: PASS or FAIL.*

□ *FAILED*

The result is recommended when a thesis/work is so fundamentally flawed in conception, methodology, methods, and/or overall conduct that even major revisions would not redeem it.

**Conduct of examination**

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Office for Postgraduate Research (Ph: 613 9919 5014: email [Natalie.Sciberras@vu.edu.au](mailto:Natalie.Sciberras@vu.edu.au)).