

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF DOCTOR OF PSYCHOLOGY (CLINICAL PSYCHOLOGY DEGREES)

SELECTION OF TOPIC AND SCOPE OF PROJECT

The research project reported should be an original empirical study focused 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.

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 course. The research strand 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. It 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.

PRESENTATION 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, because of 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, means that at Victoria University the recommended length is 30,000 to 60,000 words. A Doctor of Psychology thesis is usually between 30,000 and 40,000 words.

GRADING OF THESES

The University uses five categories for examiners' recommendations (refer to 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, and
- 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;
- any 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 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.

CONDUCT OF EXAMINATION

During the examination process, the only communication regarding the thesis/work should be between the examiner and the Graduate Research Centre.

If subject-specific questions need to be answered, the Graduate Research Centre will refer these to the relevant Chair of Examiners.

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