Master of Philosophy
Notes for Examiners

While it is not necessary that an MPhil thesis would make a major contribution to the discipline by way of new knowledge (as a PhD would require), an MPhil thesis would be expected to make a contribution to an existing body of knowledge, by applying, clarifying, critiquing or interpreting that knowledge.

1. Governance

All matters pertaining to the MPhil degree are the responsibility of the Graduate Research Committee under the general direction of the University's Academic Board.

2. The submitted thesis

2.1 It is expected that MPhil theses generally do not exceed 50,000 words. Candidates have the option to submit either hard or soft bound thesis copies.

2.2 The examination of the thesis is undertaken by two examiners, at least one of whom must be external to Monash University.

2.3 It is the practice at Monash to release the names of examiners who have agreed to act to the candidate.

2.4 The thesis is forwarded to an examiner in confidence. An examiner is under an obligation to maintain confidentiality and in no circumstance should the thesis or any part of the examination process be discussed with a third party without the prior approval of the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

2.5 Normally neither the candidate nor the supervisor is allowed to contact examiners directly during the examination process.

3. Examiner’s assessment

3.1 The Committee wishes to receive clear advice on specific aspects of the thesis and, to this end, the examiner is asked to place a tick by each statement as deemed appropriate in the enclosed report form, and an overall grade where appropriate. If an examiner reports negatively on any aspects referred to in Section 1 of the form then comments should be made in the written section.

3.2 Recommendation 2(ii) should be made only when the examiner can specify amendments so precisely that the Head of Department's decision is essentially a simple matter of fact.
3.4 An examiner may request that the University obtains from the candidate clarification of specific points in the thesis. Such requests should be made only through the Monash University Institute of Graduate Research.

3.5 Oral examinations are *not* normally a part of the examination process.

3.6 In cases where examiners deem it necessary to annotate a thesis, it should be done lightly in pencil or by the use of temporary adhesive labels.

4. **Following receipt of both examiners’ reports**

4.1 Unedited copies of the examiners’ reports are forwarded to the candidate in due course.

4.2 In the event that the two examiners disagree substantially in their assessment of the thesis, the relevant faculty is required to convene an advisory panel to determine a course of action. Most commonly an advisory panel will recommend either that:

- the thesis be revised and resubmitted to the original dissenting examiner(s) or
- an adjudicator be appointed to review the two examiners’ reports, the candidate’s response to the reports and the thesis. The names of the examiners are *not* revealed to the adjudicator.

Please use the MPhil grading descriptors when deciding a grade for the thesis.

# MPhil Grading Descriptors

Under this scale:

- 80% or above indicates that the candidate is highly likely to be capable of completing a PhD;
- 70-79% indicates that the candidate is likely to be capable of completing a PhD but would not be in the top half of PhD students within the field;
- 60-69% indicates that the candidate is not likely to successfully complete a PhD in reasonable time; and
- 59% and below represents a fail.

## H1: 80 – 100%

A mark in this range indicates exceptional work that stands out for its combination of independent thought with critical arguments and its depth and scope of knowledge. The candidate’s work satisfies the high standards of presentation, organisation and articulation of material expected of the top 25% of MPhil theses. The thesis indicates a distinctive approach or project, and at the upper end of the range it makes a significant and original contribution to debate. If the work is of sufficient originality or quality to warrant publication in a refereed journal, then it should receive a mark in this range, although this is not a necessary requirement for an H1 grade.

## H2A: 70-79%

A work with a mark in this range shows a comprehensive understanding of the relevant debates, texts, and arguments, and extensive knowledge enabling appropriate contextualisation of the material. The work displays high standards of scholarship and presentation and is well structured. It exhibits convincing, well-articulated arguments and maintains a sustained critical engagement with the subject matter with an element of originality. A mark in the top section of the range manifests the appearance of an original approach or project. The candidate is likely to be capable of completing a PhD but would not be in the top half of PhD students within the field.

## H2B: 60-69%

The candidate’s work manifests a reasonable understanding of the relevant material, and an adequate level of competency in articulation and argumentation. Its scholarly presentation is fair. However, the work presents one or more of the following deficiencies:

- It is overly descriptive and lacks evidence of sustained critical thinking, rendering it barely satisfactory as a piece of postgraduate work;
- Its focus lacks breadth and the range of primary and/or secondary text references is too narrow; and/ or
- An insufficiency in the presentation and organisation of material, or the argumentative expression, causes a substantial compromise to the work’s overall quality and consistency.

This candidate would not be encouraged to progress to a PhD.

## 0-59%

This work is unsatisfactory at postgraduate level. It fails to produce a coherent argument and does not engage in critical thinking to any significant degree. It manifests serious deficiencies in both knowledge and understanding of the field, and its expression of information and argument is unclear, weak and incoherent.