

## Tricks of the Trade

### What do examiners expect?

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### The official line:

- The examination of the thesis is undertaken by two independent and external examiners.
- Names of examiners can be discussed informally between candidate, supervisor & Ho unit
- Appointed by Research Grad School Committee
- Monash releases to the candidate the names of examiners .
- The thesis is forwarded to an examiner in confidence.
- Examiners have 8 weeks to submit their report, but the full examination period can take up to 8 months.

### Examiners will recommend that the PhD candidate be awarded the degree:

- without further examination
- without further examination subject to insertion in the thesis of amendments noted in the enclosed list to the satisfaction of examiner or head of academic unit
- subject to satisfying the examiner regarding the attached questions
- The candidate not yet be awarded the degree but be permitted to resubmit the thesis in a revised form.
- The candidate not be awarded the degree.
- For MPhils:
  - H1 : 80+%
  - H2A : 70-79%
  - H2B : 60-69%

### The examiner assesses on these criteria

- the thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge and understanding of the field concerned
- the thesis contains material worthy of publication in a form appropriate to the discipline, and
- the format and literary presentation of the thesis are satisfactory.

### personalise the examiner

- Think who you'd like to examine the thesis
- Write with an audience in mind
  - that doesn't mean be sychophantic
  - it means think about the context of examination
  - think about the subjectivity involved
  - think about what you'd like to read

### *the thesis makes a significant contribution to knowledge and understanding of the field concerned*

- How to fulfil this one?
- Doesn't have to be the most groundbreaking thing in the world, but it must add to the discourse
- There is a rhetoric to thesis writing
- 'Flag up' your contribution
- Address it in introduction to thesis
- Address it in intro to each chapter
- Summarise how your findings in each chapter make a contribution
- Use your conclusion to assert your thesis' significance

*the thesis contains material worthy of publication in a form appropriate to the discipline*

- How would I feel if I read this in a journal?
- Would I publish this chapter?
- Would I want to read this stuff in a book?
- Partly to do with content
- Partly to do with form
- Go for clarity of style
- Discipline specific – play safe or bend the rules?
- State clearly and cogently what you are doing, why you are doing it, and why it is important.

*the format and literary presentation of the thesis are satisfactory*

- Watch proof reading
- Watch consistency of citation and referencing
- Try not to leave the proof reading 'til last minute

- In the examination of a PhD thesis, examiners are reminded that the work in the thesis basically constitutes the only test of the candidate's fitness for the award of the degree.

**your examiner is human**

- they will be interested but overworked
- they might be reading it in the office, in bed, on holiday
- they might read the intro and the end and come back to the beginning
- they will definitely look to the bibliography and see if they're included (and don't get their name [or theories] wrong)
- they might be excited or annoyed
- they might be sympathetic or hostile
- but they should be professional

- don't be a clever dick
- don't be arrogant
- don't be aggressive
- don't be passive
- don't be diffident
- don't be defeatist
- don't hide – if there's a difficulty you've found, acknowledge it (can be rather disarming and lead to other areas of research)
- DO be confident: you KNOW this stuff, and you need to take the examiner on a journey with you
- Do make the reader feel secure – we *want* you to pass; we *want* this to be good...

**If there's disagreement, not the end of the world**

- If your examiners disagree, that's where Deputy Assoc Dean comes in
- Adjudication process to decide between examiners or appoint an adjudicator
- It's really, really difficult to fail a PhD. The hard bit is completing it, not 'passing' or 'failing'.
- Just be aware the exam process can take some time.