**GUIDELINES FOR THE ASSESSMENT OF A DOCTORAL THESIS**



**ASSESSING A DOCTORAL THESIS**

1. **BASIC Requirements FOR A DOCTORAL THESIS**

Requirements for this degree include the submission of a doctoral thesis. Such a thesis must make an original contribution to the body of knowledge in the particular discipline and must not have been submitted elsewhere for a formal qualification. The required length for a doctoral thesis is usually around 80 000 words, with a leeway of 10%.

1. **ASSESSOR’S DUTIES**

The name of the assessor is not normally confidential but may be withheld from the student upon request. The supervisor and/or the non-assessing chair shares the contents of an assessor’s report with the candidate (anonymously if you have indicated that on the report form).

Acceptance of the assessment task does not give the assessor the right to insist on a drastic change of the goals, focus or methodology of the study.

If the assessor requires further information concerning the thesis, or needs to discuss any aspect of it, (s)he is encouraged to make contact with the non-assessing chair. Assessors may not request any colleague or other expert to assist in the evaluation of any part of the thesis.

The assessment of the thesis **includes a viva**. This viva normally happens one to three weeks after all reports have been received from assessors. It is thus critical that we receive your report on the assessment timeously. Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, vivas will take place online until further notice. More detailed information on the logistics around the viva will be communicated to you separately.

**3. THE NARRATIVE REPORT**

Assessors shall report on the aspects of the candidate's work, with particular reference to the requirements spelt out below:

**3.1 CONTENT AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Research methodology will vary considerably between disciplines. The following considerations may not be relevant in all instances, but as a guide, we ask assessors to consider:

* + - Delimitation of the field of study.
    - Statement of aims on presentation of the problem to be resolved or investigated.
    - Has the candidate demonstrated his/her mastery of research methodology and techniques?
    - Are the findings a logical outcome of the analysis of the data?
    - Is the general layout and flow of information (division into chapters etc.) logically structured?
    - Has the candidate shown a capacity to use, evaluate and where necessary refute existing opinions in the field? Does he/she come to responsible conclusions that suggest satisfactory evidence-based personal insights in the field?
    - Has the candidate scrupulously avoided plagiarism?

**3.2 FORMAL ASPECTS**

* + - Are the language (syntax, style etc.) and presentation (proof-reading, layout, use of appendices etc.) of a satisfactory standard?
    - Is the citing and referencing done properly?
    - Is the format and layout of the bibliography correct? Does the bibliography include the most important and recent sources?
    - Is the overall impression of the presentation good?

**3.3 OTHER ACADEMIC ASPECTS**

* + - Are there any specific matters which, in your opinion, require correction, amendment or revision? (Please furnish details in your narrative report.)
    - Is the thesis worthy of publication in part or as a whole or would it be after some minor repackaging or revision?
    - Has the candidate made an original contribution to the body of knowledge in the particular discipline? (This is a prerequisite for a doctoral study.)

1. **FINAL EVALUATION**
   * + As an assessor of a doctoral thesis you do not award a mark (grade), but instead are expected to recommend a final assessment outcome for the thesis on the Assessor’s Report form supplied to you. The final assessment outcome may be one of four recommendations, namely that you:

1. approve the thesis with or without minor editorial corrections;

2. approve the dissertation with minor corrections to be done to the satisfaction of the supervisor;

3. recommend substantial amendments to the thesis in the light of deficiencies identified in the narrative report and that the revised thesis be resubmitted for reassessment;

4. reject the thesis, in which case no reassessment is recommended or considered.

* If you have written any comments or made corrections in the assessment copy of the thesis, please return this copy to the Dean's Office together with the other documentation such as the Assessment Report Form and your narrative report.
* NB: If you wish to change or update your recommendation immediately after the viva (no longer than three days after the viva), and are happy to indicate as such in the viva, you must also fill in and sign SECTION E of the Assessor’s Report form. You may also submit an updated narrative report to the NAC and Faculty Officer.

1. **INTERNAL PROCESSES TO FINALISE THE ASSESSMENT**
   * + In the event of different outcomes proposed by the assessors the necessary steps will be taken to resolve such a discrepancy as stipulated in the Higher Degrees Administration: Structures and Processes [with Additional Regulations for the Faculty of Humanities] policy document.
     + The final decision on the assessment outcomes of a doctoral thesis is taken by the Senate Higher Degrees Committee.

*Thank you for your valuable contribution to our postgraduate assessment processes in the Faculty of Humanities at the University of Johannesburg.*