

FACULTY OF ECONOMIC AND MANAGEMENT SCIENCES

Guidelines for the examination of master's degree mini- and full dissertations

1 General guidelines

Master's degree students must demonstrate that they are i) conversant with the relevant literature, ii) have clear research capabilities, and iii) are able to present their research in the required format.

A master's degree can consist of either a full research or partial research component as follows:

- For a full research master's degree, a **full dissertation** is required.
- For a course work (partial research project) master's degree, a **mini-dissertation** is required.

2 Format options

Students must be able to present their research in a systematic, logical and persuasively structured document. The final document can be presented in either the **conventional** format or in **article** format. The following provide some guidelines as to the potential layout, but each individual (mini-) dissertation may vary slightly in format.

2.1 Conventional format's structure and composition

The (mini-) dissertation would typically comprise the following general layout and elements:

- Title page
- Abstract and key terms (English (compulsory) and Afrikaans (optional))
- Acknowledgements
- Table of contents, abbreviations, lists of tables and figures (if applicable)
- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2 and/or 3: Literature review and/or Research method (if applicable)
- Chapter 4: Empirical analysis and results
- Chapter 5: Conclusions and recommendations
- References
- Addenda (may include questionnaires, informed consent forms and other relevant information).

2.2 Article format's structure and composition

The document would typically comprise the following general layout and elements:

- Title page
- Abstract and key terms (English (compulsory) and Afrikaans (optional))
- Acknowledgements
- Statement to the effect that the article format was chosen
- Table of contents, abbreviations, lists of tables and figures (if applicable)
- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2 and/or 3: Literature review and/or Research method (if applicable) Note 1

- Chapter 4/5: Article(s) ^{Note 2}
 - Chapter #: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations
 - References (may be separate for each article or combined at the end of the document)
 - Addenda (may include questionnaires, informed consent forms and other relevant information).
- **Note 1:** *In the case of article format for a **mini-dissertation**, it is allowable that the research methodology discussion is included in the first chapter (as the research weighting may be relatively low for overall degree purposes), and the literature review included in the actual article(s). A specific research method and literature review chapter may therefore not be required, as long as the level thereof as included in other sections of the article format mini-dissertation is adequate for the specific masters-level research.*
 - **Note 2:** *A full-dissertation (research masters' degree) requires at least two articles, while a mini-dissertation (structured masters' degree) requires at least one article).*

Important additional information

- The article(s) of an article format (mini-) dissertation can either i) be unpublished manuscripts suitable for publication, ii) already published articles, or iii) a combination of the aforementioned.
- Even in the article format, the (mini-) dissertation **must** still form a well-rounded integrated unit in its entirety.
- The inclusion of a literature review in the mini- or full dissertation will depend on how comprehensively the literature was reported on in the article(s). In most cases, however, a literature review may be required.
- The student should indicate the journal to which they intend to make submission, or have already made submission, or where the article has already been published. Author (journal submission) guidelines of the applicable journal(s) should be added in the addenda to the document.
- Because of the lengthy review process associated with some journals, it is **not compulsory** for an article to have been published when it is incorporated into the document, nor is the publication thereof **a prerequisite** for the examination of the document.
- Each article should contain a declaration of input and the role of co-authors (including the study leader) towards the article (if applicable). It should be noted that co-authors must provide specialty expertise, such as statistical services or other supportive expertise, that contribute to the value of the research output and aims to compliment the candidate's learning experience.
- Please note that the (mini-) dissertation will be send out to at least two examiners. It may therefore happen that an examiner requests a resubmission (with 'option 5" as indicated below). Kindly indicate in your written report whether you would like to see the resubmitted version of the (mini-) dissertation in such as event.
- The examined (mini-) dissertation (if returned) will be **shared** with the student, therefore we kindly request that if **track changes** are used to either **remove or change your name** from all comments.
Please **do not** remove your name from the **examination report**.

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MASTER'S DEGREE EXAMINER'S REPORT

Candidate	
Degree	
Title of mini- or full dissertation	
Study leader	
Co-study leader	
Assistant study leader	
Examiner	

NOTE:

The attached *Master's Degree Examiner's Report* could be used as a framework to structure the written examination report. The contribution may provide a guideline of the relative importance of the factor in the overall (mini-) dissertation.

	Contribution				
1. Research theme	10%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
• Is the theme worthy of research?					
• Has the field of research been demarcated in an applicable manner?					
• Is the title a satisfactory representation of the content?					
• Additional examiner comments: _____ _____ _____					
2. Problem statement and objectives	15%				

	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Is the problem statement clearly formulated?					
Are the objectives specified, sufficient and attainable?					
Is the research problem contextualised by means of literature?					
Additional examiner comments:					
3. Literature analysis/handling of sources	20%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Does the work provide sufficient evidence of knowledge of the relevant and recent research?					
Has said knowledge been applied in a critical and integrated manner?					
Have central concepts been sufficiently defined?					
Has the study been placed within a fundamental theoretical framework (where applicable)?					
Are the hypotheses logically deduced from theoretical problem statements (where applicable)?					
Additional examiner comments:					
4. Research methodology	15%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Is the research design or method(s) appropriate to answer the research question(s)?					
Has the student mastered the applicable research methodology?					
Has the method been sufficiently conceptualised with regard to research design, participants or data sources, measuring instruments/methods of measurement with regard to the collection of data and/or the statistical/mathematical/qualitative analysis?					

Additional examiner comments:					
5. Problem-solving/reaching of objectives	20%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Is an acceptable solution to the research problem provided?					
Are the results clearly linked to the research problem and the study objectives?					
Are the implications, conclusions/generalisations logically justifiable?					
Have recommendations from the actual findings of the investigation been made?					
Have the limitations of the study and possible future research recommendations been made?					
Additional examiner comments:					
6. Logical structure	10%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Is the work as a whole systematic, logical and well structured?					
Were the arguments clearly unpacked from the problem statement to the conclusions?					
Additional examiner comments:					
7. Documentation and technical finishing	10%				
	Poor	Below average	Average	Good	Excellent
Has the document been presented in an acceptable manner (e.g. references, tables and figures)?					
Is the stylistic and technical refinement in order?					

Has the document been written in acceptable language and is it technically well edited?					
Additional examiner comments:					

Mark awarded (out of 100%)

I have examined the above-mentioned mini- or full dissertation and my recommendation is as indicated by an X in the applicable block:

1.	Accepted unconditionally (<u>Definition:</u> Spelling errors, technical/layout/format changes, minor changes to sentences and explanations that do not affect the science or the way in which the results were interpreted and presented, but give clarifications where necessary may be included in this option)	
2.	Accepted on condition that specified revisions be made to the satisfaction of the supervisor (<u>Definition:</u> Revisions of a larger extent than mentioned in option 1 may be included, for instance improving logical arguments or critical discussions. Changing the layout and/or technical finishing. The research must however be scientifically sound and acceptable)	
3.	Accepted on condition that specified revisions of a substantive nature be made to the satisfaction of the academic director concerned (<u>Definition:</u> Revisions of a substantive nature refers to major or sizable changes for instance rewriting specific parts, updating missing information or completing half-finished arguments. The research however, must still be scientifically sound and acceptable)	
4.	Accepted on condition that specified revisions of a substantive nature be made to the satisfaction of the examiners concerned (<u>Definition:</u> The student will receive a passing grade which will stand (i.e. a percentage mark is to be awarded). Revisions of a substantive nature refers to major or sizable changes for instance rewriting specific parts, updating missing information or completing half-finished arguments. The research however, must still be scientifically sound and acceptable)	
5.	Not accepted in its current format , in which the case is referred back to the candidate for revision, elaboration or amendment and resubmission for re-examination (<u>Definition:</u> The student will not be awarded a passing grade at this stage (i.e. no percentage mark awarded). This option means that the research is scientifically not-acceptable or in order and should be revisited, elaborated on and/or changed and re-submitted for examination. No final mark should be allocated if this option is opted for. Candidates will only be able to resubmit a specific research product once for resubmission. The mini-dissertation/dissertation will be submitted to the examiner for re-examination unless it is decided otherwise by the Faculty Board or its delegates in which case the examiner will receive notification from the Dean)	
6.	Not accepted at all , in which case the candidate fails (<u>Definition:</u> This option means that the research has failed in its totality, that it cannot be reworked or resubmitted and that the student has to start all over)	

Signature

Date