



RHODES UNIVERSITY

GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS OF MASTER'S DEGREES

The following requirements for the degree of Master are quoted for the information of examiners:

1. RULE G.50 OF THE RHODES UNIVERSITY CALENDAR

Subject to the provisions of Rule G.49 candidates shall not be admitted to the degree of Master in the Faculty of Humanities (except the degree of Master of Music and Master of Fine Art), or of Science, or of Commerce, until at least two years after admission to the degree of Bachelor or one year after admission to the degree of Bachelor with Honours in such Faculty, or, in the case of the degrees of Master of Education by thesis, Master of Fine Art, Master of Laws and Master of Music, until at least one year after admission to the degree of Bachelor. Special entry criteria for the degree of Master of Education by coursework and thesis are listed in the Faculty of Education Rules. Except with the permission of Senate a candidate for the degree of Master of Education by coursework and thesis will be allowed a maximum of three years' registration in which to fulfil all requirements for the degree.

NB. Rule 50.5 of the Rhodes University Calendar states that candidates who have obtained the BPharm degree may not present their thesis for a Master's degree until at least 18 months after the date of registration for the MSc or MPharm degree.

2. REGULATIONS

- G.53 The Faculty shall appoint a supervisor, or supervisors, to advise a candidate. At least one of the supervisors so appointed must be a member of staff. For the purposes of this Rule, members of associated institutions who are also members of a faculty of the University are regarded as members of staff.
- G.60 The degree may be awarded with distinction.

3. GUIDELINES FOR CANDIDATES

These Guidelines are additional to the Rules governing the degree of Master as laid down in Rhodes University Calendar.

A thesis for the **degree of Master** must show that the candidate:

- (a) Is sufficiently acquainted with the appropriate methods and techniques of research.
- (b) Is sufficiently acquainted with the relevant literature.
- (c) Has both satisfactorily understood the nature of the problem or topic and assessed the significance of the findings.
- (d) Has satisfactorily presented the results of independent research for the award of the degree in a manner which is satisfactory as to literary style and presentation and free from grammatical and typographical errors.

Except in exceptional circumstances approved by Senate, the normal upper limit for Master's degree theses and the Master of Education degree by research is 50 000 words of text (approximately 150 A4 pages of one-and-a-half spaced typing excluding footnotes, illustrative material and appendices).

The length of a thesis in the Master's degree by coursework and research should normally not exceed 30 000 words, but should not, under any circumstances, exceed 50 000 words (100 to 150 pages, respectively, of one-and-a-half spacing, excluding footnotes, illustrative material and appendices). The Master of Education thesis in a coursework degree should not under any circumstances exceed 30 000 words.

4. REPORTS

The examiners appointed are each required to complete the report form independently and write a report on the thesis. The report should clearly state whether in the view of the examiner, the thesis/mini-thesis/dissertation:

1. The candidate should be awarded the degree and that NO corrections need to be made to the thesis.
2. The candidate should be awarded the degree, but minor corrections, usually of a stylistic, linguistic or bibliographic nature which are clearly documented by the examiner, and are to be implemented at the discretion of the supervisor and/or Head of Department.
3. The candidate should be awarded the degree after identified changes have been made to the satisfaction of the supervisor and/or Head of Department.
4. The thesis does not meet the required standard, the candidate should be invited to do further work if necessary, revise and resubmit the thesis for re-examination by the examiners.
5. The candidate should submit to an oral or written examination on the subject of his or her thesis and/or on the whole field of study which it covers.
6. The degree should not be awarded to the candidate.

The report form and report are to be returned directly to the Academic Administration Office as soon as possible, preferably scanned (legible quality) and emailed to academicadmin@ru.ac.za.

On receipt of all the examiner's reports, the Academic Administration Office will transmit the relevant documentation to the Head of Department, who will collate all the reports and return them with his/her recommendation to the Academic Administration office.

In the event of a significant disagreement between the reports, the Dean will in the first instance attempt to gain consensus by giving each examiner sight of the other examiner's report. Should no consensus be reached, the Dean shall, on the recommendation of the Head of Department, appoint an arbiter who shall be given sight of the thesis, the initial examiners' reports, any further correspondence from the examiners, and the Head of Department's collaboration and recommendation. Upon receipt of the arbiter's report, the Dean will make a decision on behalf of Faculty.

NOTE: *The University recognizes 50% as the minimum pass mark.*

Suggested guidelines for mark allocation to be used at the discretion of the examiner in respect of degree by coursework and thesis:

% Mark	These guidelines may be used in all areas of consideration
86-100	This candidate's work is in the top 10% of all Master's theses, mini-theses, dissertations that have encountered, and is publishable in its present form.
75-85	This candidate has met all the criteria extremely effectively and shows remarkable potential. There are large sections of the work that are publishable. This is a distinction candidate.
65-74	This is a highly competent effort. This candidate has a solid understanding of all that is required of him/her in the area under consideration.
55-64	This candidate has met the criteria, but has not progressed much beyond that position.
50-54	This is borderline work.
40-49	This thesis, mini thesis dissertation requires extensive reworking.
30-39	This candidate has misconstrued the requirements completely, but has made an effort.
Less than 30%	- this thesis/ mini-thesis/ dissertation is completely below standard.

While not binding, the weighting of marks reflected in the table below may be useful for structuring the evaluation of the thesis/dissertation/mini thesis. This may assist the examiner in justifying the mark allocated for the work.

Areas of consideration	Weighting	Mark given
Contextualization, problem definition, planning	10	
Methodological considerations and procedures	10	
Knowledge of the fields, the discipline and subject being researched (literature study)	20	
Ability to develop and sustain an argument; strategic follow-through: focus etc.	30	
Validity and formulation of conclusions	15	
Style and presentation	15	
TOTAL -	100	

5. CONFIDENTIALITY

From the outset examiners are asked on the report form whether they are prepared to be identified to a successful candidate and to indicate which section(s) of their report, if any, may be revealed to the candidate. Normally information permitted to be disclosed will be communicated to the candidate, but with the approval of the Dean. The Heads of Departments may, at their discretion, withhold part of the information sanctioned by the examiners.

(Please be aware that it is normally the practice for the examiner's reports, and the identity of the examiner, to be made known to the candidate at the end of the examination process. If an external examiner, or the Dean, has a reason for not complying with this practice, this must specifically be requested of the Vice-Chancellor to act on behalf of Senate).

6. AWARD OF THE DEGREE WITH DISTINCTION

(a) *Specified criteria for the award of distinction:*

The University reserves the award of a distinction for work of outstanding merit, while recognizing that the Master's degree represents not more than one or two years' full-time research, and is in many instances, the first research experience of a candidate. Examiners are asked to look for evidence of real methodological and conceptual skills, clarity in exposition and development of argument, sound judgement, originality of approach and some contribution to knowledge, but not necessarily to expect total coverage of a major problem or a substantial breakthrough in a new area. The thesis must also reflect literacy skills appropriate to the subject.

(b) *Award of a distinction for degree by thesis only:*

If all examiners agree that the degree be awarded with distinction, the Head of Department shall normally recommend accordingly. If after consultation, referred to in 5(b) above, one examiner still remain opposed to a distinction, the Head of Department may, after consultation with the Dean, recommend the award of the degree with distinction. The Dean may accept such recommendation or may refer the issue to an arbiter.