



### GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINATION

This document aims to provide a statement of the formal objectives and examination criteria for theses submitted by students from different research degrees of the Faculty of Information Technology. Where a candidate has a coursework component as part of the MIMS (Research) or the MBus Sys (Research) the grades achieved in the coursework subjects will be combined *pro rata* with the thesis grade to yield the overall grade of the degree according to that degree's regulations. For other theses from the MIT(Research), MBusSys(Research) and MIMS (Research) where there are no subjects, the examiners recommendations for assessment is solely taken into account.

#### Objectives of the Masters Thesis

The specific objectives of the thesis are to demonstrate that the student:

- has reached a good level of understanding of the present state of the art of a body of research within some part of their discipline;
- can understand and articulate the reasons why their research is necessary, and where it fits within the body of knowledge;
- knows how to employ a specific research technique, and can identify the strengths and weaknesses of that technique;
- is able to describe their study design, including a method of data collection and analysis of the results of their research, in the light of the research method employed;
- can articulate their ideas and research findings clearly and coherently; and
- is able to draw appropriate conclusions about the implications of their research for the field and identify some directions for future research.

#### Grading Guidelines

The following guidelines are provided in order to assist examiners in assigning a particular grade to a thesis. They are not intended to be prescriptive. Rather, they indicate some important areas to consider as part of the examination process.

- H1 (80-100)** There should be no major omissions in the content of the thesis. It must show that the student has an excellent understanding and the ability to critically evaluate the topic area and the research method employed. In particular, the thesis should present a significant depth of analysis of the topic of study, and should make a strong contribution to theory or practice within the field of investigation. The research material should be of publishable quality. This grade indicates that the student has the aptitude and research ability to make an excellent candidate for further postgraduate research study.
- H2A (70-79)** There should be no significant omissions in the content of the thesis. It must show that the student has a good overall understanding of the topic area and the research method, but some minor gaps are acceptable. The critical evaluation of the project and the research method must be comprehensive. This grade indicates that the student has sufficient aptitude and research ability to undertake further postgraduate research study.
- H2B (60-69)** The thesis should at least cover the major components of the research project, ie literature review, research design, data collection and analysis of results, but may be weak in several

areas. Although critical evaluation of the project and research method may be subject to recommended changes, a reasonable explanation of the project details themselves should be present. This grade indicates that the student probably does not have the aptitude and research ability to make a successful candidate for further research postgraduate study.

**H3 (50-59)** The thesis is likely to cover only some of the major components of the research project, ie literature review, research design, data collection and analysis of results. In particular, the critical evaluation of the project and research method is poor, and the basic explanation of the objectives and conduct of the research is flawed. This grade indicates that the student should not be recommended to progress to further research study.

**Fail (0-49)** It may be necessary to award a fail in the case of a student who has not described in even the most basic and straightforward manner the nature, objectives and conduct of the research. This will be the case when the examiner feels the changes necessary to bring the thesis to a satisfactory level require significant additional work beyond the time limitations of the course of study. This grade may also be awarded in the case a research project has not been complete in time or the work presented is not adequate in relation to the percentage of the research component.

## Report Guidelines

In their detailed report the examiners should state concisely the grounds on which their assessment is based, indicating fully the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis, and any amendments required. In particular, they may wish to address the following areas.

### Organisation of the thesis

Is the thesis well laid out and clearly structured? Is the material well presented? Is sufficient material present? Is the organisation suitable for the type of work being conducted? Is there a clear statement of the following:

- the contribution of the thesis to theory and practice;
- justification of the research topic;
- an explanation of the importance of the topic;
- a siting of the project within the relevant research context?

### Grasp of the problem

Does the student clearly understand what they are trying to achieve? Are terms and concepts clearly explained and the aims of the thesis clearly set out? Is the scope of the project made clear? Are the research questions clearly specified?

### Review of relevant literature

Are the breadth and depth of coverage sufficient? Has the student grasped the essence of what they have read? Are important and seminal references present?

### Description of method

Has the appropriateness of the method chosen been justified? Have possible alternatives been considered?

### Quality and presentation of results

Have the results gained been presented in sufficient detail? Are their implications clearly set out and have conclusions been drawn? Has the student provided in adequate detail the findings on which they have based the answers to their research questions?

### Analysis of results

Has the student described clearly the conclusions they have drawn from their findings, and the answers they provide to the research questions being investigated? Does the student understand the limitations of their results and method? Have they described ways in which the limitations of their approach might be addressed?

**Conclusions and suggestions for further work**

Are suggestions for further work present? Have they been extrapolated from the research carried out and are they sensible and feasible? Has the student shown how their research contributes to the larger context of the theory or practice of their research area?

**Clarity of expression**

Are ideas well expressed? Do they flow logically from topic to topic?