

Guidelines for the Research Portfolio Examination for the MArch(Prof) | MIA | MLA degrees

*Ma te rongo, ka mohio;
ma te mohio, ka marama;
ma te marama, ka matau;
ma te matau, ka ora.¹*

Please read these *Guidelines* in conjunction with the appended *Research Portfolio Outline*. They are consistent with the university's Masters Thesis Regulations (MTR).

The Examination

1. The completed Research Portfolio consists of:
 - (a) a Research Portfolio Document, which is a coherent and complete stand-alone document; and
 - (b) an On-Site Examination that consists of a Visual Display and a Presentation, which presents the work in the Research Portfolio Document.
2. The Master's Research Portfolio On-site Examination is intended to provide each candidate an opportunity to present their research in person and for the examiners to pose questions enabling both clarification of any issues arising from the Research Portfolio Document and further discussion of the work more generally.
3. The Research Portfolio Document and On-Site Examination will be assessed as a whole (100%), and a single grade is awarded.
4. The Research Portfolio Document will be provided to examiners at least three weeks prior to the On-Site Examination.
5. Examiners will familiarize themselves with the Research Portfolio Document before the On-Site Examination. Examiners may choose to draft their examination report during this period. However, because both components of the work are to be assessed, no examiner reports will be completed and submitted prior to the On-Site Examination.
6. The Masters Thesis Regulations (MTR) require the Research Portfolio to be a complete document.

¹ Through resonance comes cognisance; through cognisance comes understanding; through understanding comes knowledge.

7. Examiners are not expected to review a Research Portfolio Document that is substantially unfinished or incomplete. If an examiner is of the view that the document they have been sent is incomplete, they ought to contact the Examination administration team.

Examinations in te reo Māori

8. When a Candidate submits their Research Portfolio in te reo Māori, it is normally expected that the On-Site Examination will be conducted in te reo Māori, and in accordance with tikanga Māori.

The On-Site Examination

9. The On-Site Examination is a formal examination which can take place in person, online or as a hybrid examination, where participants are both present in person and online. The participants are the Candidate, the Examination Panel and the Candidate's Supervisor.
10. The Examination Panel consists of the two Examiners (normally one External and one Internal Examiner) (MTR 13.5 (c)) and an Examination Panel Chair.
 - (a) The Examiners are each required to:
 - (i) attend the On-Site Examination (either in-person or online)
 - (ii) recommend a grade for the Candidate's research
 - (iii) in the case where the Examiners recommend the work be revised and resubmitted, identify the needed revisions the Candidate must undertake in order for the Research Portfolio Document to achieve a bare PASS (C-) grade.
 - (iv) complete and submit their individual Examiner Report of the Candidate's research, within 7 days of the examination
 - (v) provide clear documentation of their evaluation of the Candidate's research in their Examiner's Report
 - (b) The Panel Chair is responsible for:
 - (i) ensuring the examination is held in an equitable, fair and respectful environment.
 - (ii) facilitating the examination process, compiling, and submitting the Examination Panel Summary (Chair's Report).
 - (iii) supporting the Examiners in coming to a grade agreement, where possible
11. The On-Site Examination comprises
 - (a) a Presentation and Examination, where the candidate presents their research, and examiners examine the candidate, and
 - (b) an Assessment, which is a closed session, where the examiners assess the research.
12. Invited support people and (in an open examination) any interested party may attend the Presentation and Examination component of the On-Site Examination but must remain quiet for its duration.

The Presentation and Examination (55 minutes approximately)

13. The Presentation and Examination will proceed as follows:

- (a) Where a Candidate has requested a cultural or other formal welcome, a welcome will begin the session (n.b. welcomes that require more than five minutes require approval by the Masters Research Director prior to the On-Site Examination).
- (b) The Panel Chair will introduce the participants, and provide an overview of the proceedings.
- (c) The Candidate will present their research (30 min max.)
- (d) The Examiners will examine the Candidate (20min approx; the total combined time of the presentation and examination will not exceed 50 min). The Examiners are to ask questions of the research, rather than provide feedback. While it is acknowledged that it can sometimes be difficult to simply separate questions from value comments, extensive feedback and overall value judgements are to be avoided.
- (e) The Candidate's Supervisor may identify any significant matter that the Candidate has omitted that may have a bearing on the assessment of the research (30 seconds).
- (f) The Candidate has an opportunity to make brief concluding comments about their research (2 min)
- (g) The Chair will thank participants and close this stage of the On-Site Examination. They will then ask everyone other than the Examiners to leave the room and/or online link.

The Closed-Door Assessment (1 hr approx)

- 14. After the Presentation and Examination has completed, the Examination Panel will conduct a Closed-Door Assessment in the same room or online.
- 15. The Examination Panel are the only people permitted in the room for the Closed-Door Assessment.
- 16. The Examiners will initially record their independent views of the Candidate's research.
- 17. The Examination Panel will determine how the remaining time is used during the Closed-Door Assessment in order to arrive at an agreed grade recommendation where possible.
- 18. The Chair will ensure that:
 - (a) both Examiners have a similar opportunity to articulate their independent views on the Candidate's research prior to panel discussion; and
 - (b) the Candidate's work receives an appropriate level of attention and scrutiny.
- 19. The Examination criteria are listed in the appended Research Portfolio Outline. These criteria are to be evaluated according to the university's Examination Grade Ranges and Indicative Characteristics appended at the end of this document (**Table 1**).
- 20. The Examiners may recommend a PASS grade (A+-C-), a FAIL grade (D or E), or "*Where the thesis does not meet the requisite standards, the examiners may recommend that the thesis be revised and resubmitted for a second examination*" (MTR 13.3 (e), 13.6).
- 21. The Chair will complete an Examination Panel Summary (Chair's Report). This will document the process undertaken, and note any deviations to the standard process, the reason for these and what steps were taken to ensure the examination process was fair. The Chair's Report will normally, and clearly, note that agreement on a grade recommendation was achieved and what that agreed grade recommendation is. If the examiners could not agree on a grade recommendation this is noted, as well as the two grade recommendations.

22. When Examiners come to an agreement on a grade recommendation, this recommendation is to be reflected in comments in both Examiners' Reports. There will be no litigation of the recommendation following the On-Site Examination.
23. It is important to note that a Candidate cannot be required to make substantial changes to the Research Portfolio Document if they are awarded a pass grade.

Revise and Resubmit Recommendations

24. If the Examiners are of the view that substantial changes to the Research Portfolio Document are required before it is submitted to the university library, they ought to recommend that the work be revised and resubmitted.
25. If the Research Portfolio Document is revised and resubmitted for a second examination:
 - (a) the Candidate will be given the opportunity to revise their Research Portfolio Document in accordance with amendments that the Examiners stipulate in order for the Research Portfolio Document to achieve a bare PASS (C-) grade. The Chair's Report will document these revisions
 - (b) the Candidate will normally be allowed a timeframe to resubmit the work within four months full-time or equivalent (MTR 13.6(a))
 - (c) there will be no second On-Site Examination, only the Research Portfolio Document will be examined
 - (d) the work will be submitted to the same examiners unless there are exceptional circumstances (MTR 13.6 (c))
 - (e) the highest grade that may be awarded for the work is a bare PASS (C-) (MTR 13.6(e)).
 - (f) no further opportunity to resubmit will be given (MTR 13.6).

Grade Recommendation Disagreements

26. In the event where Examiners are unable to agree on a grade recommendation, this disagreement will be recorded in the Chair's Report.
27. The Chair will advise the Examiners that they must not refer to any grade recommendation in their comments responding to each criterion in their Examiner's Report, and that their reports will normally be sent to the Candidate's supervisor for comment.
28. The Chair will additionally explain the normal process of using either a referee or a third examiner to resolve grade recommendation disagreements.

Following the On-Site Examination

29. Examination Reports are to be submitted within seven days of the On-Site Examination.
30. Instructions for submitting Examination Reports are contained in the email to Examiners that included the Research Portfolio Document link as well as other related information on the Examination process.

31. The Examination Reports are to clearly document the rationale for arriving at the grade recommendation, and are expected to use constructive feedback and language. Both the strengths and weaknesses of the research ought to be clearly identified.
32. The Examination Reports should be clear to the Candidate why they received their grade. For example, in reports where the recommended grade is not an A+, it should be clear to the Candidate why the work has been assessed as being less than an A+. It is likely that Examination Reports for work has been assessed to warrant a low PASS grade (i.e. C+ to C-) or a FAIL grade may require more explanation and a longer report.
33. The recommended length of the examiner reports is in the realm of 500-1000 words.

Examination Grade Ranges and Indicative Characteristics

Pass/Fail	Grade	Normal Range	Midpoint	Indicative Characteristics
Pass	A+	90-100	95	Outstanding performance
	A	85-89	87	Excellent performance
	A-	80-84	82	Excellent performance in most respects
	B+	75-79	77	Very good Performance
	B	70-74	72	Good performance
	B-	65-69	67	Good performance overall, but some weaknesses
	C+	60-64	62	Satisfactory to good performance
	C	55-59	57	Satisfactory performance
Fail	C-	50-54	52	Adequate evidence of learning
	D	40-49	45	Poor performance overall, some evidence of learning
	E	0-39	20	Well below the standard required

Table 1: Victoria University of Wellington grade ranges and indicative characteristic as defined by the *Assessment Handbook*, p.59