

Honours Thesis Assessment

School of Information Technologies

The University of Sydney

1. Introduction

Each thesis is assessed by two people who meet the following requirements:

- (a) neither of them shall have played a supervisory role with respect to the thesis
- (b) at least one of them shall be a member of the academic staff of the School of IT (usually both members are of the School of IT)
- (c) one of them should be part of the same research group and knowledgeable about the topic of the thesis.
- (d) one of them should not be part of the same research group and should not be a specialist in the topic of the thesis

The two examiners initially work *independently* and come to a mark based on these guidelines. The examiners may then meet with the supervisor for any clarifications of the scope or quality of the work, and the examiners then work to achieve a consensus mark (if possible).

It is a requirement that each examiner shall write a report (typically around 1 page) on the thesis, to be presented at the honours board of examiners meeting. Note that this report will *not* be made available to the student and should be submitted in *electronic format* to Katie Yang, Undergraduate and Honours Administrative Officer:
katie.yang@sydney.edu.au

It is desirable that a consensus among the two thesis examiners should be reached, so that together they forward two marks within 5 points of each other and the marks do not go across class boundaries (see next page). If no agreement can be found, an optional examiner is required. The optional examiner may be inside or outside the research lab. The optional examiner is granted enough time to read and mark the thesis for the Honours board of examiners meeting.

The examiners are asked to hand in the reports *on time*. Due to faculty requirements we have a very tight schedule.

2. Marking Scheme

An examiner assesses a theses based on following marking scheme given by the Faculty of Science. To assist the examiner a more fine-grained scheme is given later, which identifies several components of the thesis.

95-100

Outstanding First Class quality of clear Medal standard, demonstrating independent thought throughout, a flair for the subject, comprehensive knowledge of the subject area and a level of achievement similar to that expected by first rate academic journals. This mark reflects an exceptional achievement with a high degree of initiative and self-reliance, considerable student input into the direction of the study, and critical evaluation of the established work in the area.

90-94

Very high standard of work similar to above but overall performance is borderline for award of a Medal. Lower level of performance in certain categories or areas of study above.

80-89

Clear First Class quality, showing a command of the field both broad and deep, with the presentation of some novel insights. Student will have shown a solid foundation of conceptual thought and a breadth of factual knowledge of the discipline, clear familiarity with and ability to use central methodology and experimental practices of the discipline, and clear evidence of some independence of thought in the subject area. Some student input into the direction of the study or development of techniques, and critical discussion of the outcomes.

75-79

Second class honours, first division - student will have shown a command of the theory and practice of the discipline. They will have demonstrated their ability to conduct work at an independent level and complete tasks in a timely manner, and have an adequate understanding of the background factual basis of the subject. Student shows some initiative but is more reliant on other people for ideas and techniques and project is dependent on supervisor's suggestions. Student is dedicated to work and capable of undertaking a higher degree.

70-74

Second class honours, second division - student is proficient in the theory and practice of their discipline but has not developed complete independence of thought, practical mastery or clarity of presentation. Student shows adequate but limited understanding of the topic and has largely followed the direction of the supervisor.

65-69

Third class honours - performance indicates that the student has successfully completed the work, but at a standard barely meeting honours criteria. The student's understanding of the topic is extremely limited and they have shown little or no independence of thought or performance.

3. Component-based Marking Scheme

The guidelines from the Faculty of Science are given to help contextualise the following components of an Honours thesis. Examiners should assess the Honours thesis based on four (not necessarily independent) components:

1. Contribution (out of 40)
2. Critical analysis (out of 30)
3. Knowledge of area (out of 20)
4. Communication skills (out of 10)

As a rough guideline, the relative significance of these components may vary considerably with the nature of the thesis. Based on this, and the guidelines from the Faculty of Science, the examiner should assign an overall mark. For each component a more detailed marking scheme can be found on the next few pages.

3.1 Contribution (out of 40)

32-40

Research of a high standard, with a well-designed methodology carried through in an orderly manner. The results will be of value to other researchers in the field. It shows that

- creativity and innovation is evident,
- results are analysed and brought to a conclusion.

28-31

Well-designed honours project carried through in an orderly manner. The results will be of interest to other researchers in the field.

21-27

A good solution to a problem, tested by an appropriate methodology. Perhaps not of relevance in a wider context.

20

A fairly complete piece of research, but sloppily designed and executed. Not of particular interest.

0-19

Research program highly incomplete and incompetently performed. Not worth reading.

3.2 Critical Analysis (out of 30)

24-30

Has a detailed assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the results. Explains the importance of the work in a broad context, comparing it with other similar work. Identifies how the work could be extended. Shows that the method of evaluating the hypothesis is well thought out.

22-23

Achievements are identified and placed in context of area. Includes some comparison with relevant results. Problems and limitations of the work are noted.

21

Achievements are correctly identified and superficially compared to other relevant work.

15-20

Unclear or inaccurate identification of the important results, with little demonstration of their relevance.

0-14

No discussion of the results whatsoever.

3.3 Knowledge of Area (out of 20)

16-20

Provides a thorough survey of the relevant literature, including all key papers, and demonstrates good understanding of this material. The student

- clearly identifies the contributions of the literature reviewed,
- identifies the research methods used in this collection of literature,
- connects the literature to the research topic by identifying its relevance.

The student has shown lateral thinking applied to synthesising knowledge and abstracting from that knowledge.

15

Has a reasonable number of references but is not comprehensive. The student shows good understanding of the cited material.

14

The bibliography has gaps and is not discussed in sufficient detail. The student's understanding of the area is acceptable.

10-13

The bibliography has major gaps and is only discussed superficially. The student's understanding of the area is open to question.

0-9

The bibliography has major gaps. The student does not understand the other research in the area.

3.4 Communication skills (out of 10)

8-10

An appropriate writing style and structure is used (i.e. technical). Grammar and spelling are of publishable standard. The writing is coherent and has a logical structure. Acknowledgements and references are made as appropriate.

7

Coherent, concise, and complete, but has some minor defects of presentation such as unusual ordering or a few difficult passages.

6

Mostly easy to read but incomplete or strangely organised.

5

Difficult to read. Important topics omitted and badly organised.

0-4

Generally incomprehensible.

(Please e-mail your examiner's report to Katie Yang, katie.yang@sydney.edu.au
by **DATE/TIME**)

<i>Student name:</i>	
<i>Thesis Title:</i>	
<i>Supervisor:</i>	
To be completed by marker:	
<i>This thesis examined by:</i>	
<i>Comments:</i>	
Contribution:	
Critical analysis:	
Knowledge of the area:	
Comments:	
Suggested mark:	Suggested grade:
(if applicable)	
Have you initially examined the report independently and then talked with the second examiner and tried to reach a consensus (marks' difference ≤ 5 marks and marks in the same bracket – refer Section 1)?	