

Master's thesis assessment criteria

Faculty of Education and Psychology / Department of Education and Department of Teacher Education (approved by the Faculty Council on 22 April 2021)

Criterion 1. Theoretical/conceptual background; research task and question(s)

	Significance of the study and demonstration of creating new knowledge (e.g. theory, topicality)	Handling literature essential for the study; focusing the research topic	Conceptualisation of the topic	Clarity of the research task and question(s) and their connection to the theoretical/conceptual background
1	The significance of the study is justified partly, and the justifications are superficial.	There are weaknesses in the use of sources, for example, narrow or excessive scope, lack of source criticism, use of second-hand sources.	The theoretical/conceptual approach is poor, or it has been chosen or focused poorly in relation to the research task.	There are flaws or inconsistencies in the definition of the research task and research question(s). Connection to the theoretical/conceptual background is lacking or extremely insufficient.
2	The significance of the study is justified loosely or with no connection to topical scientific discussion.	There are some flaws in the use of sources, for example, limited amount of international sources, focus on non-scientific literature. The use of sources is inconsistent.	Theoretical examination and conceptualisation of the phenomenon is summarising and list-like. The relationships between concepts are described insufficiently.	There are some inconsistencies and vagueness in the definition of the research task and question(s). Connection to the theoretical/conceptual background is insufficient.
3	The significance of the study is justified by relating it to key research data on the topic.	The use of sources demonstrates sufficient familiarity with domestic and international literature. The sources have been selected well and their amount is sufficient (neither too many nor too few sources).	The chosen concepts and theoretical/conceptual approach are described appropriately.	The research task and question(s) have been defined clearly, and their connection to the theoretical/conceptual background is logical.
4	The significance of the study is justified from different perspectives by, for example, demonstrating its topicality and the creation of new knowledge based on earlier key research literature on the topic.	The use of sources demonstrates very good familiarity with domestic and international literature. Source criticism is demonstrated by the choice and evaluation of key literature.	The theoretical/conceptual examination of the phenomenon and the use of concepts are clear and consistent. Central theory and earlier research data have been described concisely and by summarising existing data clearly.	The research task and question(s) have been defined clearly, and their connection to the theoretical/conceptual background is logical and strongly justified in light of earlier research.
5	The significance of the study is justified in various ways by, for example, demonstrating its topicality and the creation of new knowledge as well as excellently identifying central gaps in existing research.	The use of sources demonstrates excellent familiarity with domestic and international literature. It also demonstrates insightful source criticism and a profound understanding of the discipline.	The theoretical/conceptual examination of the phenomenon is logical and creditable. The mastery of concepts is faultless and insightful. Theory or earlier research are restructured, and the synthesis provides new perspectives.	The research task and question(s) have been defined clearly, and their connection to the theoretical/conceptual background is logical and clearly justified in light of earlier research. The research task and question(s) are innovative, and their aim is to create new knowledge.

Criterion 2. Data, analysis methods and ethical questions

	The background of data collection methods: selection, description and justifications	Description of the data acquisition process	Sufficiency, quality and relevance of the data as regards the research questions	Relevance of analyses to the research questions; the implementation of analyses (e.g. correctness, innovativeness, profundity)	Clarity of data analysis description	Consideration of ethical questions related to the study
1	The background of data collection methods has been described insufficiently or illogically.	The description of the data acquisition process is insufficient and imprecise, including only disconnected observations.	The data is modest, disconnected or unrepresentative as regards the research questions.	The data analysis methods are inappropriate and used poorly.	The description of analyses is missing or includes only some disconnected observations loosely related to the analyses.	Ethical questions have been handled insufficiently.
2	The choice and justification of data collection methods have been described superficially, but they enable solving the research task.	The description of data acquisition is mainly clear but in places imprecise and insufficient.	The quality or quantity of data are insufficient and enable answering the research questions only partially.	Data analysis is superficial or has methodological shortages or errors.	The description of analyses is mainly clear but includes shortages or errors.	Discussion on ethical questions is narrow, and sources are utilised only to some extent.
3	Data collection methods have been chosen and justified in accordance with the research task.	The essential stages of data acquisition have been described clearly.	The data is sufficiently broad and enables answering the research tasks/questions.	Considering the research task and nature of the data, the analyses have been made so that the main contribution of the data has been utilised.	The essential parts of the analyses have been described clearly, mainly correctly and, to some extent, utilising methodological literature.	Ethical discussion considers the main critical points related to one's own research process, utilising sources.
4	Data collection methods have been described precisely, and their choice for the research task has been justified very well.	Data acquisition has been described consistently and comprehensively, stage by stage, utilising relevant methodological literature.	The data is broad and diverse in relation to the chosen methodological approach, enabling answering the research tasks/questions very well.	The analysis has been implemented consistently and thoroughly. The data has been used appropriately, and data analysis follows exactly the practices of the chosen methodological approach.	The analysis and its progress have been described stage by stage, comprehensively and in detail, also utilising international methodological literature essential for the analysis method.	Multifaceted ethical discussion considers all the ethical solutions potentially related to the research process, evaluating them both critically and in an organised manner based on literature.
5	Data collection methods have been described in a particularly precise but concise manner. Their choice for the research task has been justified in various ways and utilising methodological literature insightfully.	Data acquisition has been described precisely and concisely, stage by stage, reflecting on the chosen solutions insightfully in light of the methodological literature. If needed, data acquisition can be repeated based on the reporting.	The data suits excellently for answering the research questions (e.g. unique or profound). The data enables analyses that are clearly relevant to the research questions.	The analysis has been carried out thoroughly and skilfully, utilising the data appropriately and considering its richness and details. The analysis is of a methodologically high quality and possibly also includes methodological development.	The analysis and its progress have been described stage by stage, logically, precisely and skilfully. In describing the analysis, also international methodological literature related to the chosen analysis method has been applied excellently and with a deep understanding.	The consideration of research ethical questions is critical and insightful. All research ethical questions possibly related to one's own research process have been considered knowledgeably, linking them closely to the different parts of the work.

Criterion 3. Presentation of results

	Reporting the results according to the chosen method	Compact and systematic, but simultaneously sufficiently extensive, description of results	Answering the research question(s)	Appropriate illustration of results (e.g. figures, tables, examples)
1	The presentation of results does not correspond, or corresponds poorly, to the used method.	The description of results is incoherent, superficial or wanders off the topic. The description is insufficient and list-like, or interpretations not supported by the data are presented as results.	Incomplete answers to the research question(s).	The results have not been illustrated at appropriate points, and the presentation is list-like or insufficient.
2	The presentation of results partly corresponds to the used method and/or partly complies with conventions.	The description of results is partly targeted and essential, but partly insufficient and/or not based on the data.	Incoherent and/or superficial answers to the research question(s).	There are insufficiencies in illustrating the results, and/or the presentation of results is declaratory and lacks sufficient explanations.
3	The results have been reported according to the conventions of the chosen method.	The description of results covers the essential content of completed analyses. The results are based on the data.	All the research questions are answered.	The results have been presented in a clear and structured way (e.g. samples of data, tables, figures).
4	The results have been reported according to the conventions of the chosen method, and the analysis and reporting of the results is conceptually precise.	The results of analyses are based on the data and presented in a concise and systematic way.	All the research questions are answered so that the results section constitutes a harmonious whole.	The results have been presented in a clear and structured way as well as illustrated in various ways.
5	The results have been reported in line with the conventions of the chosen method, and reporting is implemented independently and innovatively. The analysis and reporting of the results is conceptually precise/insightful.	The results have been presented insightfully, skilfully, consistently and logically based on the conducted analysis.	Answering the research question(s) is profound, which makes the results section a harmonious and logical whole that fulfils the research task.	The results have been illustrated in various ways and with exceptional precision/insight.

Criterion 4. Interpretation of the results, conclusions, reliability of the study

	Relating the results to an earlier theoretical/conceptual background and research data	Reflecting on the significance of the results; conclusions and justification of needs for further research	Handling the strengths and weaknesses of the research process (e.g. conceptualisation, methods, results, limitations)	Evaluation of the reliability of the study
1	The analysis of results is limited to observations and findings as such. Dialogue between the theoretical/conceptual background and the results is missing.	Discussion on the significance of the results is narrow, or its focus is not based on the results. Conclusions are presented insufficiently or inconsistently. The identification of needs for further research is either narrow or completely missing.	The research process is analysed insufficiently or inappropriately.	The evaluation of reliability includes disconnected observations related to reliability.
2	The interpretation of results and the discussion include partly structured dialogue between the theoretical/conceptual background and the results. However, the discussion repeats the results or has a weak connection to them.	Discussion on the significance of the results and the conclusions made on them are mainly well argued. Needs for further research have been presented, but they are not clearly related to the theme of the study.	The analysis of the research process includes a disconnected, superficial observations on different subareas of the process (conceptualisation, methods, results, limitations).	The evaluation of reliability is carried out on a general level, without a clear connection to the applied methodological solutions. Sources are utilised to some extent but not comprehensively.
3	The interpretation of results and the discussion include structured dialogue between the theoretical/conceptual background and the results. The discussion has a clear connection to the research task.	The significance of the results and the conclusions have been discussed in a well-argued manner. Realistic needs for further research on the theme have been presented.	The analysis of the research process includes some central observations on some subareas (conceptualisation, methods, results, limitations).	The evaluation of reliability is well argued and appropriate for the used methodological solutions, as well as based on sources.
4	The interpretation of results and the discussion are conceptually strong and seamlessly related to the research task, which results in structured and multifaceted examination of the phenomenon.	The significance of the results has been discussed in various ways from the perspectives of practice as well as the discipline, and the conclusions are based on the results. The proposals for further research are relevant to one's own research results, and they are justified very well based on literature.	The analysis of the research process is multifaceted but focuses profoundly only on some subareas (conceptualisation, methods, results, limitations).	The evaluation of reliability is multifaceted concerning the content and sources, and it highlights essential critical perspectives on the author's own activities as well.
5	The interpretation of results and the discussion demonstrate an independent, critical and innovative approach as well as ability to analyse large thematic entities related to one's own results and the theoretical/conceptual background.	The significance of the results has been discussed profoundly in various ways. The conclusions are clear and appropriately based on the results as well as connected to the conceptual and theoretical background and the introduction. The presented proposals for further research are innovative, relevant to the topic, and argued excellently.	The analysis of the research process is multifaceted and critical in all the subareas (conceptualisation, methods, results, limitations).	The evaluation of reliability is multifaceted and insightful. It includes critical reflection on one's own activities, focuses on the used methodological solutions and is based on sources.

Criterion 5. Scientific writing

	Structural logic and coherence of the research report	Citing and referencing techniques and the use of tables and figures	Mastery of academic style and vocabulary	Readability, fluency and cohesion of the text
1	The structure of the research report is illogical and insufficient.	Citing and referencing techniques and the use of tables and figures include several errors or weaknesses.	The vocabulary is narrow and colloquial.	The language is unpolished; the text has linguistic errors and lacks cohesion.
2	The overall structure of the research report and/or the relationship between the subsections is partly illogical.	Citing and referencing techniques and the use of tables and figures partially include errors and are mechanical.	The style and vocabulary are partly appropriate, partly colloquial.	The whole text includes different types of linguistic shortcomings which, however, do not affect readability. Cohesion is poor.
3	The overall structure of the research report is mostly logical and clear, but parts of the subsections may be illogical in relation to the overall structure.	Citing and referencing techniques and the use of tables and figures are appropriate but may be one-sided and mechanical.	Scientific style is mostly used in writing. Scientific vocabulary is mainly used appropriately.	The text is mostly linguistically flawless, fluent and cohesive.
4	The overall structure of the research report is logical and clear.	Citing and referencing techniques and the use of tables and figures are precise and coherent.	Scientific style is used in writing. Scientific vocabulary is used appropriately and skilfully.	The text is linguistically flawless, fluent and cohesive.
5	The overall structure of the research report, including the subsections, is excellent and constitutes a harmonious whole.	Citing and referencing techniques are precise and coherent, and the use of tables and figures is skilful and appropriate throughout the thesis.	The author masters scientific style and vocabulary excellently.	With respect to language, the text is of a high level and demonstrates excellent skills and maturity in scientific writing.