

Evaluation criteria for doctoral dissertations and licentiate theses

Acceptable theses are assessed on a scale of *fail* – *pass* – *pass with distinction*

All doctoral dissertations and licentiate theses are expected to comply with the responsible conduct of research and research ethical principles.

- Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations for misconduct in Finland by the Finnish National Board on Research Integrity (TENK): <https://tenk.fi/en/advice-and-materials>
- Ethical guidelines for studying and the processing of academic fraud at the University of Jyväskylä (Rector's Decision): <https://www.jyu.fi/en/for-students/instructions-for-bachelors-and-masters-students/regulations-and-directives-guiding-studies/dealing-with-academic-misconduct>

Please note that the doctoral dissertation or licentiate thesis will be evaluated as a whole in which the importance of different sections may vary. An exception to this is the proposal and decision of the grade for the doctoral dissertation after the public examination (public defence), in which case the proposing and awarding of a *pass with distinction* mark requires a *pass with distinction* mark in each area of the assessment criteria. Similarly, a licentiate thesis may be awarded a *pass with distinction* mark if each part of the assessment criteria is assessed as *pass with distinction*.

	Fail	Pass	Pass with distinction
Choice of Topic and Links to Previous Research	The topic/focus of the study is poorly argued and does not provide new knowledge. There are significant shortcomings in the knowledge of previous research and the work is not positioned in a meaningful way in relation to it.	The research topic is scientifically sound and the research produces new knowledge. Its theoretical, social and/or practical relevance is also justified. The research demonstrates knowledge of previous research relevant to the topic, and it is positioned in a meaningful way in relation to it. Previous research is appropriately evaluated. There may be some shortcomings or superficiality in the reasoning behind the topic and its relation to previous research.	The choice of topic is exceptionally original and will make a significant contribution to the advancement of research in the field. The research demonstrates an in-depth knowledge of the research relevant to the topic. Research relevant to the topic is also critically evaluated.
Theoretical Knowledge and	The theoretical framework used in the research is inadequate or its application is superficial or incomplete.	The application of the theoretical framework used in the research and the definition and use of key concepts is appropriate and successful. The research	The application of the theoretical framework used in the study is exceptional. The key concepts of the research are systematically defined and used. In

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Theoretical Framework	<p>There are shortcomings in the use and definition of key research concepts. Use of concepts is confusing and inconsistent.</p> <p>Familiarity with the theoretical starting points and research tradition of the research field is poor or almost non-existent.</p>	<p>demonstrates familiarity with the theoretical underpinnings and research tradition of the field.</p> <p>The theoretical framework, the definition and use of concepts and familiarity with the theoretical starting points and research traditions of the research field may have some shortcomings and be limited.</p>	<p>addition, the concepts are discussed insightfully and in a manner which develops them further.</p> <p>The research demonstrates an excellent command of the theoretical starting points of the research field. The research demonstrates a deep knowledge of the research tradition, and it is thoroughly and clearly linked to the theoretical foundations and traditions of the research field.</p>
Research Problem and Questions	<p>The research problem is unclear and has no clear link to the theoretical framework. The research design is confusing or incomplete.</p> <p>The research questions may have been derived from some part of the research problem, but they are poorly formulated or framed.</p>	<p>The research problem is sufficiently challenging and justified, and it is linked to the theoretical framework.</p> <p>The research questions are derived from the research problem, they have been formulated in an appropriate way and their scope is properly defined. Similarly, the research design has been constructed to answer the research problem and questions in a sufficiently clear and coherent way.</p> <p>There may be some shortcomings in the precision, accuracy and defining of the research questions and the research design.</p>	<p>The research problem is exceptionally challenging and excellently argued. Its connection to the theoretical framework is solid and commendable.</p> <p>The research questions respond directly to the research problems; they are both well defined and well formulated. The whole research design is innovative.</p>
Material/Data, Method and Analysis	<p>The choice of data and/or its delimitation are not appropriate to the research problem. There are also problems with the presentation, collection and management of the data, which may also be of an ethical nature.</p> <p>The methodological choices are neither appropriate nor justified by the research questions. The use of methods and analysis is mechanical and/or imprecise.</p>	<p>The selection, delimitation, collection method and management of the data have been adequately implemented, presented and justified. The data are appropriate to the research problem.</p> <p>The methodological choices are justified and appropriate to answer the research questions.</p> <p>The analysis demonstrates mastery of the chosen methods and is sufficiently systematic and reliable.</p>	<p>The selection, delimitation, collection and management of the data is particularly commendable, and the presentation of the choices made is excellent and comprehensive. The data selected are an excellent fit with the research problem.</p> <p>The methodological choices show a deep understanding of the research problem and are well presented and justified. The analysis is insightful, systematic, accurate and reliable.</p> <p>Overall, the research is methodologically and analytically innovative.</p>

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		However, there may be some shortcomings in the scope or quality of the data, as well as in the management of the methods and analysis.	
Findings and Conclusions	The study fails to answer the research questions set, and the modest results are not related to the theoretical framework and previous research. The study does not add new knowledge to the field.	<p>The research results are presented with sufficient expertise. The study answers the questions raised and the interpretation of the results is related to both the theoretical framework and previous research. The study contributes to the body of theoretical and/or empirical knowledge or perspectives in the field.</p> <p>However, there may be some superficialities and shortcomings in the above-mentioned aspects.</p>	<p>The presentation and discussion of the research findings is exceptionally competent, insightful and critical. The study provides substantial answers to the questions raised, and the interpretation of the results in relation to the theoretical framework and previous research is highly competent.</p> <p>The study provides important new theoretical and/or empirical insights for research in the field.</p>
Reporting	There are significant structural, linguistic or stylistic problems in the reporting of the research. There is a serious lack of mastery of scientific writing and use of sources.	<p>The research is reported clearly and fluently. The style and language of the report is good. The research complies with the conventions of scientific writing and the use of sources is appropriate.</p> <p>There may be minor weaknesses in structure, style, language or use of sources.</p>	The study forms an excellent, coherent whole. The report is exceptional in style and language and convincingly follows the conventions of scientific writing. The use of sources is appropriate throughout.
Defending the Work at a Public Defence of the Dissertation	The candidate is unable to defend their dissertation, does not answer the opponent's questions and does not interact properly.	The candidate presents and defends their research in an acceptable manner.	The candidate presents and defends their research in an excellent manner.