Evaluation criteria for doctoral theses

Acceptable theses are assessed on a scale of *fail – pass – pass with distinction*. Good scientific practice and ethical principles must be followed in all doctoral theses.

Please note that a doctoral thesis is assessed as a whole, in which the weighting or importance of the different sections of the assessment may vary. A grade of *Pass with distinction* will be awarded to dissertations that are considered to be in the top 10% of their field.

Evaluation criteria	Fail	Pass	Pass with distinction
Topic choice and positioning	The topic is unclear or poorly defined, or its selection has not been sufficiently justified. The choice of topic is not connected to previous research in the scientific/research field.	The topic is relevant and clearly defined and delineated. The choice of topic is sufficiently connected to previous research in the scientific/research field.	The topic is exceptionally important, innovative, and well-defined. It is clearly connected to the scientific/research field and introduces contemporary perspectives.
Research objectives and Research questions	The research problem is not clearly defined. The research problem may conflict with the theoretical framework. The research questions are vague or not connected to the research problem.	The research problem is clearly defined. The research problem is connected to the theoretical framework. The research questions are precise and linked to the research problem.	The research problem is excellently defined and innovative. The research problem shows a consistent and clear connection to the theoretical framework. The research questions are extremely well-formulated and logically justified. They open new perspectives on the research problem.

Theoretical framework and Background	The theoretical framework is incomplete, outdated, or irrelevant.	The theoretical framework is up-to-date and relevant, and it supports the research.	The theoretical framework is excellently constructed, diverse, and insightful.
Methodological approach and data selection	The methodological approach is unclear, lacks consistency, or is unsuitable for the research problem or data.\n\nData selection is random, poorly justified, or inadequate for the objectives of the study.	The methodological approach is clearly defined and justified, and it is well-suited for addressing the research problem. The methodological approach is appropriate for the chosen data.\n\nData selection is logically justified and sufficient for the needs of the research.	The methodological approach is excellently designed and supports the solution of the research problem in an innovative and consistent manner.\n\nThe chosen methodological approach is exceptionally suitable for the data.\nData selection is excellently justified, of high quality, and optimal for solving the research problem.
Data analysis and interpretation/implications	The data analysis is incomplete, distorted, or the conclusions are not based on the data.	The data analysis is logical and consistent. The conclusions of the study are based on the data.	The data analysis is profound, multidimensional, and innovative. The data-driven analysis provides insightful perspectives on the research problem.
Scientific significance and impact	The research does not bring significant new knowledge to the scientific/research field.	The research produces new knowledge and contributes to the ongoing discussion in the scientific/research field.	The research provides a significant and innovative contribution to the scientific/research field.

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Author's independence	The author's independent contribution has not been clearly demonstrated or is insufficient. The research does not include the author's own critical reflection.	The author's independent contribution is clearly demonstrated and sufficient. The research reflects the author's own critical thinking.	The author's independent contribution is clearly demonstrated and exceptionally significant. The research consistently reflects the author's critical thinking and research expertise.
Quality of writing and presentation	The dissertation is poorly structured or contains linguistic deficiencies.	The dissertation is clearly structured and linguistically flawless.	The dissertation is of an excellent standard in terms of structure and language.
Public defense	The candidate is unable to defend the dissertation acceptably; the candidate does not demonstrate mastery of the research topic or the content of the work.	The candidate performs acceptably in the defense and is able to demonstrate mastery of the research topic and the content of the work.	The candidate performs excellently in the defense and demonstrates an exceptional mastery of the research area and the content of the work.