Evaluation criteria of theses for undergraduate degrees in the Philosophical Faculty from 1 August 2015

The Faculty Council of the Philosophical Faculty decided on the evaluation criteria of theses for undergraduate degrees on 20 January 2010. On 17 December 2014, the Faculty Council updated the evaluation criteria for Master's theses. The changes will enter into force from 1 August 2015. Separate guidelines for the supervision, submission, storage and inspection of Bachelor's and Master's theses, Perustutkintokoulutuksen opinnäytetyöt filosofisessa tiedekunnassa (Theses for undergraduate degrees in the Philosophical Faculty, only in Finnish), were approved by the Faculty Council on 21 May 2014.

EVALUATION AND GRADING OF BACHELOR'S THESES

General evaluation criteria

The purpose of the general evaluation criteria of the Philosophical Faculty is to specify the evaluation criteria and their connections to the grade given for the thesis. For students, the criteria indicate what types of things should be taken into consideration when writing the thesis. Common criteria ratified by the Faculty are perforce general in nature and can be specified further through detailed criteria approved by schools or subjects.

In their theses, students are expected to demonstrate their knowledge of scientific thinking and practices in their field. The author of the thesis must be capable of literary work within the scope of the research problem. The author must display command of a research method and the basic knowledge and skills required for research. The thesis is primarily a work carried out in connection with a seminar in which the student receives guidance from the Bachelor's thesis supervisor. A thesis can also be written by two students in collaboration, provided that the division of work between the students can be demonstrated and evaluated (Degree Regulations, 1 August 2014). In the Philosophical Faculty, the collaboration between students can also be demonstrated during the supervision process (Decision of the Faculty Board, 21 May 2014).

Theses are graded with the verbal grades passable (numerical grade 1), satisfactory (2), good (3), very good (4) and excellent (5). The general evaluation criteria consist of familiarity with the field of research, choice and application of literature, framing and definition of the problem or question, the material and analysis methods, results and their discussion, conclusions and their discussion, presentation and ethical principles.

The Bachelor's degree evaluation form (see Appendix 1) can be used to support evaluation. The form has the following grading scale: 0 = fail, 1 = passable, 2 = satisfactory, 3 = good, 4 = very good, 5 = excellent. The form includes seven considerations that are taken into account when determining the grade. The final grade is not necessarily the average of these seven parts, rounded up to the nearest integer. Aspects such as the difficulty of the subject or other weighty matters that favour the granting
of a higher or lower grade than that calculated from the components will be taken into account in the
evaluation. If any of the sections receives a grade of 0, the thesis cannot be approved.

Evaluated sections

1. Familiarity with the field of research, and choice and application of literature

The subject of evaluation is the command and application of the concepts in the student’s field: are
concepts used in an expert manner that is fitting and appropriate to the matter being discussed?
Simple summaries of literature will not suffice for a good or higher grade. An ability to engage in
dialogue with and between the sources is an indication of a meritorious thesis. The use of sources and
source criticism will also be evaluated.

2. Framing and definition of the problem or question

The success and clarity of framing the research problem are evaluated in this section. The purpose and
goals of the thesis must be framed and its subject defined. The thesis must be based on appropriate
and up-to-date material. The research problem determines whether or not the thesis will constitute a
structured whole.

3. Materials and analysis method

The acquisition and sufficiency of material and the analysis methods and their applicability and use are
evaluated in this section. This section is of particular importance in empirical theses. The
appropriateness, justification and expertise of the chosen method’s application are evaluated in this
section.

4. Results and their discussion

The quantity and quality of reporting on results are evaluated in this section. The subjects of
evaluation include sufficiency, appropriateness, technical implementation, applicability to the basis
(theory) and research problem, reliability and credibility of interpretations and, ultimately, the results
as a whole.

5. Conclusions and their discussion

The examiner will focus his/her attention on the conclusions drawn from the results and the discussion
of these conclusions. The conclusions' consistency, link to the theoretical basis and results, and
argumentation are key considerations in the evaluation of this section. The assessment of the
credibility and strong and weak points of the thesis also play a role in the evaluation of this section. A
critical examination of the research process as a whole is a hallmark of a good thesis.

6. Presentation

The areas evaluated in this section include language, scholarliness, conformance to scientific practice
in the field, finishing, references and the list of references. The flow of the text and stylistic matters
also influence the quality and success of the result.

7. Ethical principles

The thesis must be ethically sound in all respects. The planning, implementation and reporting of the
study must comply with the ethical principles of research.
EVALUATION AND GRADING OF MASTER’S THESES

General evaluation criteria

The following criteria shall be taken into account in the evaluation of Master's theses:

- the scientific relevance of the research subject, question and problems; their conceptualisation, framing and consistent application in the thesis; the study's positioning with regard to prior research; knowledge and command of the study's subject matter;
- theoretical basis and its significance to the research problem;
- methodological suitability;
- sufficiency, discussion and control of the material;
- command of description, analysis and interpretation methods in the discussion of the material;
- justification and critical reflectivity of the various parts of the study, such as the evaluation of results with regard to the research problem, their juxtaposition with scientific discussion in the field, and the evaluation of the results' significance (innovativeness);
- compliance with the ethical principles of research and the credibility of the study; and
- clarity of presentation (logical structure, adherence to principles of scientific presentation, and correct language of the thesis).

In making the evaluation, it should be noted that shortcomings in certain aspects of the thesis can be compensated for by the successful presentation of others.

Grade-specific characterisations

The following qualitative characterisations presented for the grades are general in nature and can be applied with different weightings. The different orientations of theses should be taken into account in the evaluation, which should be fine-tuned with the detailed criteria laid out by schools or subjects.

Laudatur – Eximia cum laude approbatur

Theses worthy of the highest grades demonstrate precisely the significance of the research subject and problems with regard to the field of science. The author of the thesis demonstrates intimate familiarity with the research tradition in his/her subject and positions his/her study with a critical eye in relation to the tradition. The study demonstrates the author’s excellent command of the theories and methods of the field, along with the ability to apply them independently in a general manner and, in particular, to the author's research subject. Theses worthy of the highest grades are theoretically and methodologically innovative and are based on significant material. The analysis and interpretation parts of such theses are constructed logically and explicitly connected to their theoretical and methodological backgrounds. The research results are clearly presented and their basis on analysis and interpretation is demonstrated. The thesis is constructively critical, ethically sound and credible by nature. The thesis is excellently written, conforms impeccably to the structural requirements of scientific theses and the general principles of scientific presentation, and is flawless in terms of language.

Laudatur-level theses are set apart from those worthy of the grade eximia cum laude by their innovativeness and relevance to the field of science due to their production of new information.
Theses worthy of the highest grades could be published as scientific papers and, in principle, are of a level required of licentiate theses as is or with minor changes.

*Magna cum laude approbatur* – *Cum laude approbatur*

The research problems of theses falling into this grade category are clearly framed and positioned with regard to the research tradition. The thesis has a logical structure, with clearly distinguishable introduction, methodology, analysis, interpretation and conclusion sections. The materials, theoretical and methodological and other sources of the thesis are relevant and their inclusion is justified. The thesis clearly answers the questions set in the research problem. The thesis is impeccable in presentation and form, and sound in terms of research ethics.

Theses worthy of the grade *magna cum laude approbatur* differ from *cum laude approbatur* theses in their greater weight and innovativeness and better presentation.

*Non sine laude approbatur* – *Lubenter approbatur*

Theses whose research problems are satisfactorily presented and positioned with regard to the research tradition fall within this category. The study has a theoretical and methodological basis and adequate material with regard to the research problem, and these are of a satisfactory level. The discussion of research results and the argumentation are fairly superficial. There are clear shortcomings in the structure, language and presentation of the thesis. Theses of this category differ from those worthy of higher grades in that they contain significant shortcomings and inaccuracy in some of the evaluated sections. For example, the thesis may be mechanical, lacking in originality and frequently narrow in its discussion, or its research problem and implementation may lack significance to the field of science, or some sections of the study may be unfinished. The thesis must nevertheless be ethically sound.

*Lubenter approbatur* theses differ from those worthy of the grade *non sine laude approbatur* by being more modest throughout and including a greater number of considerable shortcomings and/or shortcomings in more areas.

*Approbatur*

*Approbatur*-level theses include fairly serious shortcomings in content, structure and methodology. The choice of subject, theory and methodology are random, which results in failure to frame the study appropriately. The thesis is highly unoriginal, derivative and structurally vague. Conformance in principle to the structure of a scientific thesis, adherence to the principles of scientific presentation and soundness in terms of research ethics are nevertheless required of acceptable theses.