

WHAT EXAMINERS DO: WHAT THESIS STUDENT SHOULD KNOW

SPS, UTM



Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education

ISSN: 0260-2938 (Print) 1469-297X (Online) Journal homepage: <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/caeh20>

What examiners do: what thesis students should know

Clinton Golding, Sharon Sharmini & Ayelet Lazarovitch

To cite this article: Clinton Golding, Sharon Sharmini & Ayelet Lazarovitch (2014) What examiners do: what thesis students should know, *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 39:5, 563-576, DOI: [10.1080/02602938.2013.859230](https://doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.859230)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02602938.2013.859230>

TIPS 1: EXAMINERS TEND TO BE BROADLY CONSISTENT

- Surprisingly, studies found that examiners tend to be broadly consistent despite differences in institutional instruction, discipline, nationality, level of degree or the experience of examiners.

**Do Not
Disturb**

**Viva Examination
In Progress**

TIPS 2: EXAMINERS EXPECT THESIS TO PASS

- Most examiners consider a thesis a pass until it is proven a fail, and will only consider failing a thesis if there are significant errors or omissions that threaten the credibility of the research.

Less than 1%
examiners
recommend
a fail.



TIPS 3: EXAMINERS JUDGE A THESIS BY THE END OF FIRST OR SECOND CHAPTER

- Examiners make initial judgment about the quality of thesis after reading the first two chapters and sometimes while they skim the abstract, table of contents, introduction and conclusion.

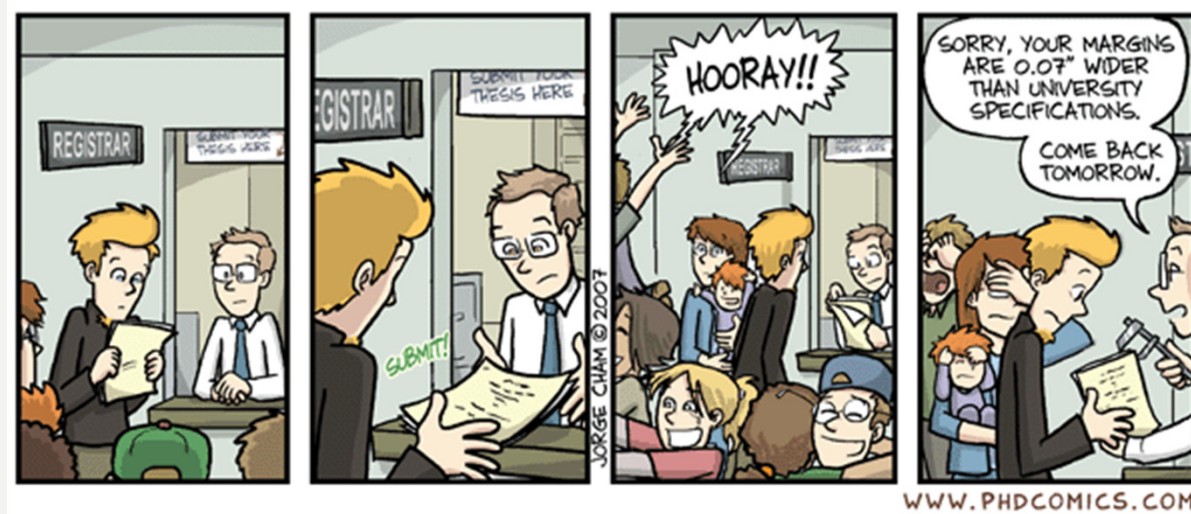


TIPS 4: EXAMINERS READ A THESIS AS AN ACADEMIC AND NORMAL READER

- **A thesis must be enjoyable to read.**
- **It must meet examiner's academic and normal reader expectation.**

TIPS 5: EXAMINERS ARE IRRITATED AND DISTRACTED BY PRESENTATION ERRORS

- Lead to poor impressions for thesis examiners.
- Examiners become distracted, irritated, frustrated and agitated by frequent presentation errors.



TIPS 6: EXAMINERS FAVOUR A COHERENT THESIS

- Coherent writing with focus, flow and a logical and explicit structure that integrate and connect parts the thesis.
- Examiners also equate coherence with a convincing argument.



TIPS 7: EXAMINERS FAVOUR THESIS THAT ENGAGES WITH THE LITERATURE

- Examiners look for thesis that analyse, interpret, categorise , order or apply the literature to draw new insights and conclusion.
- A pass require coverage and a working understanding of the literature; but, for a good thesis candidate must critically engage with the literature.

TIPS 8: EXAMINERS FAVOUR A THESIS WITH A CONVINCING APPROACH

- A candidate must convince examiners that the approach they adopted is appropriate.
- A well explained and justified approach, with clear acknowledgements of strengths and possible limitations, is important.

Structure of a
Persuasive Essay



TIPS 9: EXAMINERS FAVOUR THESIS THAT ENGAGES WITH FINDINGS

- Examiners favour thesis that thoroughly engages with the findings, rather than merely listing what was found.
- A candidate must interpret, analyse and critically appraise their findings, draw conclusions and show the conclusions of the research



TIPS 10: EXAMINERS GIVE SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

- Examiners make judgement about the quality of a thesis but they also offer constructive, formative feedback about how to improve.



CONCLUSION

- Thesis examiners tend to be broadly consistent in their practices and recommendations.
- They expect and want a thesis to pass and they are unwilling to recommend a fail. But, first impressions count, and as they begin to read, they will quickly make up their mind whether a thesis is likely to be high or low quality.
- They will read with academic expectations and the expectations of a normal reader. Like any reader, they get annoyed and distracted by presentation errors, and they want to read a thesis that is a coherent whole, not a series of unrelated points.
- As academic readers, they favour a thesis that engages with the literature, has a convincing approach, analyses and engages with the findings, and which is publishable. In fact, being publishable and making a contribution to the literature are the most important things that examiners look for.
- When they have finished, they give not only a final evaluation of a thesis, but also instruction and advice to improve the thesis and any further publications and research.
- We hope that these generalisations will shed light on the often secret process of assessing a thesis, and reassure, guide and encourage students as they write their theses.