

Assessment Guidelines for the Master's Thesis at the Institute of Foreign Languages

These guidelines are to be used by examiners in the assessment of master's theses in Arabic, English, French, German, Italian, Russian, and in Spanish Language and Latin-American Studies.

1. The Role of External and Internal Examiners in the Examination Committee

The committee consists of one internal and one external examiner, in accordance with the national minimum requirement. The supervisor is not a member of examination committee. All members of the examination committee have status as examiners, but the external examiner leads the deliberations of the committee and has a special responsibility to ensure that local grading levels are consistent with national norms. The external examiner has the final say in cases where there is disagreement about the grade.

2. Grading Criteria

The committee is required to meet with the supervisor prior to its own, separate deliberations. In this meeting, the supervisor a) situates the master's thesis within a broader field of study, and b) outlines the nature and extent of any assistance that the candidate has received while working on the thesis. The external examiner is in charge of this meeting.

The thesis is awarded a single official grade (corresponding to the written component of the 350 course). Only the two members of the examination committee are present during the actual deliberations. When determining the grade, the main emphasis is on the final product, not the process from which it has resulted.

In general, grades are to be awarded in accordance with the program's normal course of study: four semesters of study for full-time students is typical. The committee may act with discretion in cases where the specified time has been exceeded.

The following aspects are central when determining the grade:

- Formulation of the thesis' subject matter and research question
- Design and scope of the thesis
- Reflections on and the use of theory and method
- Discussion and analysis of relevant literature and previous research in the field
- Choice, delimitation, collection and analysis of (empirical) data
- Clarity and structure of the thesis
- Language proficiency
- Originality (new material, new research questions, new knowledge, new hypotheses; this should not preclude the possibility of conducting meta-studies)
- Level of independence

- Thoroughness
- Suggestions for possible avenues to continue the work

The most vital assessment criterion is the overall merit of the thesis; when it comes to weighing each element, the committee has full discretion.

3. Grading System

The Institute of Foreign Languages employs the national scale from the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions (for Norwegian version, see http://www.uhr.no/utdanning/karakterpanel_1). It defines letter-grades as follows:

Symbol	Description	General, qualitative description of valuation criteria
A	Excellent	An excellent performance, clearly outstanding. The candidate demonstrates excellent judgement and a high degree of independent thinking.
B	Very Good	A very good performance. The candidate demonstrates sound judgement and a very good degree of independent thinking.
C	Good	A good performance in most areas. The candidate demonstrates a reasonable degree of judgement and independent thinking in the most important areas.
D	Satisfactory	A satisfactory performance, but with significant shortcomings. The candidate demonstrates a limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.
E	Sufficient	A performance that meets the minimum criteria, but no more. The candidate demonstrates a very limited degree of judgement and independent thinking.
F	Fail	A performance that does not meet the minimum academic criteria. The candidate demonstrates an absence of both judgement and independent thinking.

4. Oral Examination Associated with the Master's Thesis

A provisional grade is awarded to the written thesis before the oral examination; the final grade is determined after an oral examination, which should be conceived of as a conversation about the thesis. The candidate may ask to be notified of the provisional grade before the oral examination, at the beginning of the oral examination, or when the final grade is determined.

The internal and the external examiner both have a responsibility for conducting the oral examination. The internal examiner begins the examination, and normally poses most of the questions (unless the two examiners have agreed on a different division of labor). If there is disagreement about the grade, the view of the external examiner is decisive.

After assessing the oral examination, the provisional grade awarded to the thesis may be adjusted one grade up or down. The grade may be improved in cases where the candidate demonstrates a considerably higher degree of insight than is reflected in the thesis, or in cases where the examination resolves problems that were of crucial importance during grading. If the candidate is unable to satisfactorily defend any of the key issues raised in the thesis, the provisional grade may be lowered. The candidate's command of, and ability to communicate academically in, the foreign language in which the work has been conducted will also be taken into account at this stage of assessment.

Upon conclusion of the oral examination, after due deliberation, the candidate will be given an oral explanation of their final grade, specifying the committee's reasons for their evaluation of both the thesis and the oral examination. This explanation will primarily be given by the external examiner.

5. Discipline-specific Alterations and Amendments

Based on long-standing traditions or idiosyncrasies in certain disciplines, alterations or amendments to these assessment guidelines may be necessary. These must be approved in advance by the Head of the Department.

6. Appeals

Candidates may appeal the grade awarded. Each new assessment requires the use of new examiners. If the written grade is altered, a new oral examination must be conducted in order to determine a final grade. After a new committee is appointed, the examination result must be submitted within three weeks. Only special reasons may give cause for extending this deadline.

The examination result may be altered either to the advantage or disadvantage of the complainant.

Assessment of an appeal is bound by the original guidelines for the work and by the procedures here enumerated (for instance, the new committee must meet with the supervisor before their deliberations, cf. section 2).