

Masters thesis

A Masters thesis provides students with the opportunity to develop and undertake a significant research project under the guidance of a suitable academic supervisor.

As part of the Masters thesis, students will:

- Define a research topic or problem
- Plan a research programme
- Select and use appropriate methodologies to collect and analyse data.

In the process, students learn much about the research process, including:

- How to undertake research in a specific area of study
- How to deal with the information collected, and
- How to write this up into a final thesis that reports on the results and sets out a thesis or argument based on these results.

Three-paper vs four-paper theses

The difference between a three-paper thesis and a four-paper thesis is solely in the size and scope of the research.

	Three-paper thesis	Four-paper thesis
Points value	90 points	120 points
Duration (part-time)	18 months	24 months
Duration (fulltime)	52 weeks	52 weeks
Word limit	30,000 words	40,000 words*

Note: In some areas of research it is appropriate for the word count to be much lower than this. Students should consult with their supervisors as to an appropriate word count.

Eligibility

Entry into the masters thesis normally requires:

- A B+ average or higher across a student's prior postgraduate papers
- Completion of an approved research methods paper
- Approval by the proposed supervisor
- Approval by the School Postgraduate Leader
- Approval by the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research.

Entry is subject to the Faculty's ability to provide appropriate supervision for the student's proposed research project.

Summary of steps for masters thesis enrolment

Application and enrolment

- Student initiates discussions with a potential supervisor or the Programme Adviser (see 'Finding a Supervisor')
- Student draws up an initial draft proposal (see 'Draft Research Proposal')
- Student submits online application to enrol (ATE) via i.waikato.ac.nz*
- Student submits the completed Masters Thesis Application Form (please ask at the Office) and a copy of the research proposal to supervisor
- Application approved by supervisor, School Postgraduate Leader and Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research
- Applicant notified by email about the decision by the Faculty Administrator – Postgraduate and receives Enrolment Agreement
- Student completes the Enrolment Agreement letter and returns it to the Fees Office.

** If studying part-time, the student will need to repeat this step one month prior to his/her enrolment end date (see 'Re-Enrolment').*

Getting started

- Student meets with the supervisor to discuss the research plan and timeline for completion (see 'Undertaking Research and Ethics Review Process')
- Student submits an Ethics application (see 'Undertaking Research and Ethics Review Process')
- Student begins process of data collection, analysis and writing.

Initial submission of thesis

- Student arranges printing and soft-binding of the thesis (see 'Presentation and Binding of the Thesis')
- Student submits digital copies of his/her thesis to the University's Research Commons (see 'Submission of the Thesis')
- Student submits two softbound copies of the thesis to Student Centre with Masters Thesis Submission form and Library Deposit Form
- Student applies to graduate 'In Anticipation' via waikato.ac.nz/sasd/graduation/apply.shtml

Examination

- Supervisor nominates external and internal examiners
- Nomination is approved by the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research
- Thesis is forwarded to the internal and external examiners for marking
- Examiners write examination reports and make grade recommendations
- Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research makes final grade recommendation.

After examination

- Assessment and Graduation Office advises student of final grade
- Student is given three week deadline for submitting hardbound copies of thesis
- (Optional): Student makes minor editorial changes before submitting hard-bound copies of thesis
- Changes checked by supervisor before final submission.

Final submission for thesis

- Student submits two hardbound copies of the thesis to Student Centre with Declaration Form (see 'Presentation and Binding of the Thesis' and 'Submission of the Thesis').

Completion and graduation

- Student is officially informed about the final grade and masters degree completion
- Student is eligible to graduate at the next available graduate ceremony.

Masters thesis application and enrolment

Preliminary considerations before applying

Undertaking research for submission in a thesis is a demanding activity, requiring high-level academic skills, commitment and stamina. As such, potential research students should ensure they are well-prepared for research and have an interest in their proposed research topic.

Students wishing to undertake a masters thesis should start thinking about potential research topics whilst completing their first postgraduate papers. This gives students the opportunity to have preliminary discussions with their lecturers regarding potential research topics. It is the student's responsibility to find and approach a potential thesis supervisor.

Students should discuss possible areas of masters thesis research and study options with their Programme Adviser or the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research, who can direct students to the relevant school or a potential supervisor. The University Experts File (waikato.ac.nz/research/expertise) lists staff research interests, and is another good starting point for finding a supervisor.

Getting underway

Once you have found a suitable supervisor, you can start work as soon as you and your supervisor are ready. It is usual to begin work before formal enrolment has been completed, although it is not usual to do more than meet once with your supervisor to discuss the focus of the literature search and reading to begin on. Contact the Library for support with accessing library databases. Typically you would then work independently until the formal enrolment process is completed. During this time you can begin work on the structure of your thesis and read relevant literature.

Draft research proposal

Before submitting a formal application for admission into a masters thesis paper, students should carry out a preliminary literature review and prepare a draft thesis proposal. Both the draft proposal and research plan for the thesis should be developed in collaboration with the student's supervisor.

Writing a proposal helps students to:

- Reflect on the project and predict any difficulties that might arise
- Think about what can be realistically achieved in a particular timeframe
- Focus the research once it is started.

Students should begin by searching the literature to see what has been written about their topic and how it has been researched in the past. They should then identify a suitably weighty research question, ensuring it is not a question to which the answer is already known.

The research proposal should include:

Component	Explanation
Working title	
Abstract/summary	A general overview of the research topic or area you would like to investigate
Research questions	What is the issue you wish to investigate?
Methodology	What type of research methods will you use?
Forms of analysis proposed	
Significance of the research	Who would be interested in the outcome of the study?
References or bibliography	A list of literature referred to in the study

Formal application process

Once you have finalised your draft research proposal and have found a suitable supervisor willing to supervise your research project, you will need to submit your online application either via your iWaikato student account (under 'Change of Enrolment' section if you are currently enrolled) or an online application to enrol (ATE) through the University's website (if you are a new student or returning after a break in your studies): waikato.ac.nz/study/enrol

You must also complete and submit the Masters Thesis Application Form available from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's website: waikato.ac.nz/education (search Masters Degrees). Or contact Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's Postgraduate Administrator to obtain a copy of the form. Submit your application form before or at the same time you complete the online application process with the University.

Note: *You may commence your masters thesis enrolment at any point during the academic year. The masters thesis papers have individual start and finish dates and there is no application deadline for students wishing to enrol in a masters thesis. However, your masters thesis application should be submitted to Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's Postgraduate Office at least one month before the intended start date for your thesis enrolment to ensure timely enrolment.*

Enrolment

Once you have submitted all of the required documents, your application will be assessed by the relevant school and the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research. Once your academic qualifications and results have been assessed and the availability of suitable supervision is established, your application to enrol will be formally approved and you will receive an Enrolment Agreement letter with fees invoice for your masters thesis enrolment.

Moodle and e-group

Moodle is the University's online learning and content management system. You will be given access to Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's Moodle site for masters thesis students with resources and support available for masters thesis students.

You will also be subscribed to our mailing group for masters thesis student so that you can be informed of any upcoming events or other activities that may interest you.

Re-enrolment

If you are enrolled in a masters thesis paper on a part-time basis, you can only be enrolled for a 12-month (52 weeks) period at the time and you must re-enrol for each study year and the remaining number of points. Your re-enrolment must be submitted at least one month before your official enrolment end date for the given year of enrolment. You can submit your re-enrolment either via your iWaikato account (under 'Change of Enrolment' section) or via the University's online application to enrol website: waikato.ac.nz/study/enroll

Note: *Masters thesis students are required to be enrolled continuously for the entire period of their masters degree up to the submission of their thesis.*

Changes of enrolment and withdrawals

Changing from fulltime to part-time or vice-versa

If you are enrolled fulltime in a thesis paper and wish to change your enrolment to part-time, you will need to complete the Application for Change of Conditions (Masters) Form available from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's website: waikato.ac.nz/education

Thesis enrolment extensions

A student who expects their thesis will not be ready for submission by the due date needs to apply for an extension of the submission time. Suspensions of enrolment are not possible.

Extensions of 21 days or fewer do not require re-enrolment and payment of additional fees. To request a 21-day extension a student should:

- Contact Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Postgraduate Administrator in writing at least one month prior to the submission deadline
- Provide a reason for their extension request
- Ask their supervisor to contact Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Postgraduate Administrator in support of the thesis extension.

Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Postgraduate Administrator will notify the student when their extension request has been granted.

Extensions of over 21 days require re-enrolment and incur additional fees. To apply for an extension of longer than 21 days, students should complete the Application for Change of Conditions of Enrolment Form available from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education website: waikato.ac.nz/education

For further details regarding thesis enrolment extensions, please refer to the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*.

Withdrawals and termination of thesis enrolment

A student wishing to withdraw from his/her thesis paper should do so prior to the end of the enrolment period by:

- Consulting with their supervisor
- Making a formal request in writing to the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research, detailing their reasons for wishing to withdraw.
- Completing a change of enrolment through i.waikato.ac.nz
- Students are responsible for ensuring that their withdrawal from a paper is registered. Failure to do so can result in an 'Incomplete' grade (IC=fail) on the student's academic record once the enrolment period is complete. This prevents the student from re-enrolling in their degree.

For more information about the regulations governing withdrawals and failed papers, please refer to the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*.

Medical or compassionate withdrawals and extensions

If exceptional circumstances outside of your control mean that you feel unable to complete your thesis, please contact Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Academic and Student Administration Office for advice. Requests for full or partial fee refunds for withdrawals made on exceptional medical or compassionate grounds should be submitted in writing to the Head of Student and Academic Services. You will need to provide a full account of the circumstances that have led to your need to withdraw, and supporting documents such as a medical certificate. Staff in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Academic and Student Administration Office can assist you with this process.

If you require additional time to complete your thesis due to exceptional medical or compassionate reasons you must follow the thesis enrolment extension steps outlined on page 73. Thesis extensions involve re-enrolling in the thesis, and this incurs additional fees. The process to request a refund of these fees is an additional process – approval of an extension by the Faculty does not entail that your fees are waived for the approved period of extension. If you wish to apply for a full or partial fees refund for the additional fees incurred by re-enrolling in your thesis you will need to apply in writing to the Head of Student and Academic Services and provide supporting documents such as a medical certificate. Staff in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Academic and Student Administration Office can assist you with this process.

Undertaking research and ethics review process

Research

According to the University's regulations "research means an inquiry of an investigative, experimental or critical nature which is driven by a question, hypothesis, or intellectual position capable of rigorous assessment, and the findings of which are open to scrutiny and formal evaluation; it includes any intellectual or creative work published, exhibited, presented, or performed in a written, spoken, electronic, broadcasting, visual, performance, or other medium".

We strongly recommend students familiarise themselves with the Student Research Regulations outlined in the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*: calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/studentresearch.html

Preparation of a research plan

As part of the thesis process, a student may need to refine his/her topic and the focus of his/ her research in consultation with their supervisor. The thesis research plan (including timeline for completion) should also be prepared in consultation with the supervisor, as this is a document that both student and supervisor will need to refer to often.

A masters thesis research plan normally includes the following components:

- Title of the study
- Statement of the research topic/problem and the over-arching question that will guide the research
- Explanation of the significance of the study
- Proposed aims/objectives of the study
- Review of selected literature, including research activity in the field, in order to situate the research question within a context
- The methods that will be used to investigate the research question
- A statement of any ethical issues that can be identified
- A timeline for completion.

Once a student has finalised his/her research plan, he/she will be in a position to apply to Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's Research Ethics Committee for a research ethics review.

Research ethics review process

All research must be carried out in a way that both respects the rights of those people it involves directly and protects the integrity of the research enterprise in broad terms and the scholarly pursuit of knowledge. The University requires that formal ethics review procedures are followed before any research involving people as participants may begin. If a project requires the collection of data from people, it will require prior approval from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Research Ethics Committee. Proceeding ethically is an integral component of research design, so students must keep ethical considerations in mind from the very start of their project planning.

Ethics application forms

Each masters thesis student is responsible for completing the formal application for ethical review of their project in consultation with their supervisor, then forwarding this to the Research Ethics Committee.

Applications are considered by the full Committee, in the first instance, and then followed up by individual Committee members. The Committee will send written confirmation of their decision to each student once this has been made.

Ethics application dates

Applications for research ethics approval may be submitted to Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education Ethics Committee at any time. Please apply using the online application system, which can be accessed at edlinked.waikato.ac.nz/ethics Applications will be responded to within three weeks of the application date. For any queries about this system email fedu.ethics@waikato.ac.nz

The *2017 University of Waikato Calendar* details the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations, which students should consult when preparing ethics applications: calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/ethicalconduct.html

Code of conduct for research

It is a basic assumption that researchers are committed to the highest standards of professional conduct in undertaking and supervising research. Researchers in this context are University staff members and research students. They all have a duty to maintain the highest standards of probity in research applicable to their discipline and to the good standing of the University. These standards include:

- Rigorous opposition to all forms of fraud, including misrepresentation and falsification of results
- The observance of the highest standards of safety in relation to themselves, their co-workers and research participants
- The maintenance of confidentiality and the full attribution and acknowledgement of authorship of all published material.

Students should participate only in work which conforms to agreed ethical standards and which they are competent to perform. Where research which has an ethical component is conducted overseas, ethical approval must be sought both in New Zealand and overseas to ensure that any potential differences in cultural values are fully considered. Research involving human subjects and personal information (including any personal records) must be approved by Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's Research Ethics Committee (see also Student Research Regulations in the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*).

Misconduct in research

Misconduct in research includes:

- The fabrication of data by claiming results where none have been obtained
- The falsification of data, by changing records or falsely claiming the use of techniques, methods or levels of precision
- Plagiarism, including the direct copying of hand-written, typed, printed or published text or notation; the use of other people's data, arguments or literature reviews without appropriate acknowledgement, or permission; and the deliberate use of published or unpublished ideas from other people without adequate attribution, or permission for such use
- Misleading ascription of authorship, including listing of authors without their permission where this is relevant, attributing work to others who have not contributed to the research, and failing to acknowledge work primarily produced by a postgraduate student, trainee or associate
- Other practices that deviate from those accepted within the research community for proposing, conducting or reporting research, such as intentional infringement of the University's code of ethical behaviour.

Misconduct does not include honest error or honest differences in the interpretation or judgement of data. Procedures for dealing with misconduct in research are set out in detail in the Handbook for Research and Outside Professional Activities available from the UNILink Office's website: waikato.ac.nz/research/unilink

Data storage

If data or materials of a confidential nature are obtained by a student in the course of their research, full confidentiality must be observed. The data or material must not be used for personal or commercial advantage or given to a third party for that person's commercial advantage except with the specific consent of the person or agency providing the data or material. If research is undertaken by the University under contract to an outside body, the obligations of the contract governing that research must be fully observed.

A student should consult his/her supervisor about any specific requirements for data storage for research involving humans. Students are required to retain all records of their research, including field and laboratory notebooks. Practices in this regard must conform to the principles of the Privacy Act 1993. The University of Waikato requirements on archiving of data and privacy and storage of personal information are set out in paragraph 10 of the Human Research Ethics Regulations in the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*.

In addition to these regulations, when the research is the basis of an assessed piece of work such as a thesis, students should store data on individuals and data sets in the original form as set out in the thesis until the University informs the student about the outcome of the examination of their thesis, and for the duration of any appeal procedure against the student's examination results. Supervisors are responsible for checking that students are aware of these requirements.

Supervision

Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education is responsible for providing suitable supervision for student research. Supervisors should be competent in the field and have time to supervise their students adequately. The majority of academic staff members at our Faculty are available to supervise masters theses. To undertake supervision, the staff member should have a qualification at least equivalent to that which is being examined, not be enrolled in that degree, and have had research experience in the general field of the thesis. In special circumstances, you may have more than one supervisor. They may work together as a team (co-supervision) or there may be a panel including a first supervisor and one secondary supervisor.

There are a number of ways students can make an initial enquiry about supervision. Students may choose to:

- Make an appointment with a Postgraduate Leader (see pages 7-8)
- Contact the Faculty Academic and Student Administration Office at Reception for advice
- Contact the Associate Dean – Academic (for directed studies or dissertations) or the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research (for theses)
- Approach a potential supervisor directly.

Responsibilities of the student

The responsibilities of the student include the following:

- To become familiar with, and abide by, the University's regulations governing the degree and associated procedures as contained in this and other documents such as *2017 University of Waikato Calendar* and Faculty information.
- To apply for ethical approval for the research once fully enrolled and working with their supervisor
- To carry out his/her programme of study to a high standard according to research plans agreed upon with your supervisor and within the prescribed period of study.
- To agree to, and abide by, a timetable for at least monthly meetings or other formal communication (such as email) with the supervisor.
- To raise matters discussed informally with supervisors at timetabled meetings in order to confirm a common understanding and to enable recording of agreed action.
- To keep records appropriate to the standards and conventions of the discipline and to regularly submit these records for examination by the supervisor so that the candidate can be assisted to maintain high standards of recording.
- To submit written thesis work for comment and discussion in accordance with agreed protocols
- To report on their progress regularly to their supervisor.
- To bring any problems which may be interfering with study or research, including those of a social or medical nature, to the attention of the supervisor or their Head of School, or the Manager of the Academic and Student Administration Office.
- To present work or findings from time to time as agreed with the supervisor.
- To consult in confidence with the Head of School or the relevant Associate Dean if there are problems with supervision.
- To decide when to submit the thesis for examination, having taken account of the supervisor's opinion, and to submit the thesis for examination according to the requirements set out in University regulations

and within the prescribed period of study.

Responsibilities of the supervisor

The responsibilities of the supervisor include the following:

- To assist the student to prepare a plan for research which can be completed and written up within the prescribed period of study.
- To make sure ethical approval is sought for the research, where appropriate.
- To arrange for the student to be made familiar with the facilities and research activities of the department and Faculty.
- To encourage the student to play a full part in the social and intellectual life of the school and Faculty.
- To check that health and safety requirements are carried out in accordance with University and Faculty procedures and that the student receives any required safety training.
- To establish a timetable of regular meetings with the student at which all matters relating to the student's work can be discussed. There should be at least a monthly meeting or other formal communication (such as email) of which records are kept to make sure there is a record of the contacts between the supervisor and the student so that the progress of supervision can be reviewed at any stage. In the event of subsequent disagreement the records of the meetings will be an important basis on which to resolve issues.
- To assist the student by regularly checking the records of data and observations and suggesting improvements where appropriate.
- To discuss with the student work accomplished and to review, and if necessary revise, the research objectives as the work proceeds in the light of progress made.
- To submit to the School Postgraduate Leader or the relevant Associate Dean any reports about the student's progress as required.
- To advise the student of concern at the earliest opportunity if the student falls behind expected progress and to actively assist the student to improve.
- To advise the School Postgraduate Leader or the relevant Associate Dean if the student continues not to meet expected progress and to seek advice on, or assistance with, action to be taken.
- To provide constructive criticism and advice on submitted written drafts within one month or within time-frames agreed to.
- To facilitate timely completion of the student's study and ultimate completion of the thesis.
- To arrange (in consultation with the School Postgraduate Leader) for a replacement supervisor if a sole supervisor is absent for a period exceeding four weeks.
- To select and nominate the external examiner of the thesis.
- To inform the student that s/he may approach the School Postgraduate Leader or the relevant Associate Dean, as appropriate, if the student wishes to discuss any matters related to his/her supervision.

Establishing a successful relationship

There are various ways to establish an appropriate supervision arrangement. A successful relationship between supervisor and student rests on professionalism, mutual respect, consideration, courtesy and trust.

Thesis students should expect to work independently and take responsibility for making the best use of available resources, including time with their supervisor. It is important that from the beginning of the thesis, students and their supervisors work together to establish an understanding about:

- Availability of the supervisor
- How and when to contact one another
- Whether the student and supervisor will normally discuss the student's progress face-to-face or by email
- The frequency and length of meetings
- Whose responsibility it is to call meetings
- The format of meetings
- Whether an audio or video recording of the meetings will be made
- The process for submitting draft writing and receiving feedback
- Generally, how the student and supervisor will work together.

Supervisory contract

The most central aspect of being a masters research student is the quality of relationship that is built up between student and supervisor. It is a good idea for both parties to use some form of 'contract' to cover the different aspects of supervision agreed upon at the start of the research.

Maintaining contact

It is essential that a student takes responsibility to:

- Maintain contact with the supervisor
- Be clear about what has to be done and why
- Do his or her best to meet deadlines
- Keep the supervisor informed about problems, such as ill health, which may interfere with progress.

Students may find it useful to write a brief summary of each supervision meeting and share this with their supervisor via email to maintain an ongoing written record of the supervision process.

Distance students

Distance students may set up supervision arrangements that do not require face-to-face meetings. These might include the use of:

- Phone
- Email
- Video/voice-over-IP services (such as Skype or Appear.in).

Supervisors of distance students should ensure their students have access to all the resources they require, and should monitor student progress carefully. Where possible, it is advantageous for a distance student to meet in person with their supervisor in the early stages of their enrolment to discuss the research plan in

detail.

Both supervisor and student should keep a written record of important matters and decisions covered during phone, email or video/voice-over-IP discussions.

Receiving feedback

Students should:

- Avoid, where possible, handing in very rough work, or material in the form of notes
- Present work in as well-presented a format as possible
- Bear in mind that too much time crafting very early writing could be counterproductive, given that much of this could change at a later stage of research
- Ensure the supervisor is given sufficient notice about a request for feedback on written work. Students may wish to give suggestions about the type of feedback required (eg formatting, comments on research design, etc).

Concerns/complaints about supervision

Occasionally there are problems in a relationship between a supervisor and a student. These might relate to:

- Academic issues (eg a fundamental disagreement over methodology or content)
- Conflicts in teaching or learning styles
- Conflicts in personality.

Ideally a student will be able to work through these matters with their supervisor. If the student cannot, they should:

- Talk to a member of staff they are comfortable approaching in confidence about acting as an advocate for the student
- Arrange a meeting with the supervisor's Head of School or Postgraduate Leader
- See the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research.

Where a concern has not been resolved by initial discussions, or it is too serious to be treated as a concern, then a formal written complaint may be sent to the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research.

If a complainant remains dissatisfied with the outcome an appeal can be lodged with the Faculty of Education Dean within 28 days of the date of the letter notifying the student of the outcome of the complaint.

The thesis

A thesis is a piece of written work of the research undertaken by the student under supervision. It should:

- Critically investigate the topic
- Demonstrate an appropriate level of expertise in the methods of research and scholarship
- Demonstrate the independent development of ideas relevant to the topic
- Present the results clearly in a manner which makes a contribution to the subject area concerned.

It should normally:

- Include a clear outline of the research to be addressed and the theoretical, contextual or disciplinary basis of your research
- Provide an overview of the rest of the thesis
- Include discussion of the methodology (although structures, methods and formats may differ between and within disciplines).

The thesis should develop arguments in a sustained and coherent manner and bring these arguments to a conclusion.

The difference between a 120-point thesis and a 90-point thesis is solely in the size and scope of the research. A 120-point thesis is the equivalent of one year of fulltime study. A 90-point thesis is the equivalent of three-quarters of a year's fulltime study.

The regulations regarding theses are outlined in the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar* calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment/dissertations.html We recommend students familiarise themselves with these.

For further information, please also refer to the University's webpage:

waikato.ac.nz/sasd/info-current/exams6.shtml

Writing your thesis

Perhaps the best way to explore how theses are developed and structured is to read exemplars. Some hard-bound theses copies are available in the University's Libraries and in Departments. Digital copies of University of Waikato's theses are deposited and available for viewing through Research Commons – a service provided by the University of Waikato Library as well as ADT – the Australasian Digital Theses Programme, which the University is a part of: adt.caul.edu.au

It is important to be discerning when you read these as the grades are not recorded on them. Some will have just got through; others will be A+ quality.

Language

Theses will normally be written in English, but students may request permission to submit a thesis written in te reo Māori. Students wishing to do so must give notice of their intention in writing to the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research. This notice of intention will allow the Faculty the time and opportunity to make appropriate arrangements for internal and external examination.

For further details about the use of te reo Māori, please refer to the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*: calendar.waikato.ac.nz/assessment

Format of the thesis

Both the student and supervisor should agree to the format of the thesis during the early stages of writing. Drafts of all chapters should be submitted to the supervisor for comment. Reasonable and prompt feedback should be provided on substantive issues. Most supervisors also give feedback on style, grammar etc. However, students are encouraged to seek additional feedback from other readers.

The candidate's written thesis will usually contain:

- Title page
- Abstract
- Acknowledgments
- Table of contents
- List of diagrams/tables/illustrations (where applicable)
- Text of the thesis
- Reference list
- Glossaries of important words, phrases and keys to symbols (where applicable). Illustrative materials (such as computer disks and CDs) may be submitted with the thesis. Such objects must either be bound with the thesis or placed in a pocket inside the cover
- Appendices (if any).

The thesis must be presented in 12 pt type, in 1.5 or double spacing on A4 paper of at least 60gsm. It may be printed on either one or both sides of the page. Margins for all pages (before binding), including those on which photographs or diagrams are mounted, must be as follows: inner 40mm; outer 30mm; top/bottom 20-25mm.

Detailed information concerning the form and style of theses is given in the booklet *Writing and Submitting a Dissertation or Thesis at the University of Waikato* available from the University Library or on its website: waikato.ac.nz/library/study/guides/thesis-writing For successful writers extensive drafting and re-working of text, although time-consuming, is the norm.

Citing references

There are three principal methods of citing references in a text: footnotes, the author-date and the reference-number system. The preferred method of referencing required in Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education is that used by the American Psychological Association (APA). A student should consult their supervisor as to the method favoured in their subject area. There are particular rules for each and it is important to be consistent in the application of the method decided upon.

Bibliographic style is important and considerable time will be saved if all necessary data for each citation are collected at the time of consulting the works concerned. Various styles are acceptable, but consistency is key: one style should be used throughout. Students should check with their supervisors regarding any preferred method(s) within the specific subject area.

The University of Waikato Library contains various authorities for consultation on styles of footnoting and bibliographies.

Avoiding plagiarism

Plagiarism is: "... presenting as one's own work the work of another, and includes the copying or paraphrasing of another person's work in an assessment item without acknowledging it as the other person's work through full and accurate referencing; it applies to research and to assessment (as defined in the Assessment Regulations 2005) presented through a written, spoken, electronic, broadcasting, visual, performance or other medium." For more information please see the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*.

Plagiarism is cheating:

- It is viewed as serious misconduct, as outlined in the Student Discipline Regulations 2006, and may result in disciplinary action
- The University prohibits plagiarism, whether it is intentional (you mean to copy without acknowledgment) or unintentional (you are not aware that you are copying without acknowledgment)
- Unintentional plagiarism is not seen as a defence against plagiarism

Guidelines for sourcing and referencing styles are available from the University of Waikato Library.

Word limit

The recommended maximum word lengths for masters theses are:

- 120-point thesis: approx. 40,000 words
- 90-point thesis: approx. 30,000 words.

These guidelines exclude the reference list (or bibliography), footnotes and appendices. The Head of the School in which a student is enrolled has the discretion (except where the HOS is the supervisor), in consultation with the supervisor, to allow a thesis to exceed these guidelines where it is thought this would be more appropriate for the topic. The HOS should confirm in writing to the Associate Dean Postgraduate Research and the Assessment and Graduation Office that such permission has been granted, specifying the maximum word length approved.

In some areas of research it is appropriate for the word count to be much lower than the maximum word count. Consult your supervisor about an appropriate word count for your thesis.

Timeframes

A realistic time-line for completion is crucial. Beginning researchers with little experience are much less efficient as researchers than those who have had years of experience.

It takes time to become an efficient researcher. Thesis students should not be surprised if it takes them more time than their supervisor to:

- Locate materials
- Decide what is relevant
- Rank the significance of what is relevant
- Develop an appropriate methodology
- Organise a division of research results into effective chapters
- Write/rewrite results of the research into an acceptable and accessible form.

Editing and proofreading a thesis can often take more time than expected. Students should also allow sufficient time for printing and binding of the thesis. Contact the printer in advance to find out how long this will take.

Thesis quality

A good thesis is coherent. This means that all the bits connect and how they connect is spelled out for the readers:

- The introduction gives an overview of both the research project and the structure of the thesis.
- The literature review demonstrates the student's knowledge of existing research and locates the student's research within the context of this research. All sources must be referenced in the most current APA style.
- The methodology section explains the method of research and the methodological theory that underpins this choice. This section should also specify why this method of research is suited to the specific piece of research.
- Results should be explained and linked to existing research. Students should demonstrate how their research makes a contribution to the literature through observations and insights about the significance of their results to existing knowledge in the field of research. Doctoral students should aim to demonstrate innovation in this discussion.
- Students should demonstrate how their research addresses the research question initially posed.
- In addition to detail, students should be able to draw back and address wider issues about the context and purpose of the research and where related research might go in the future. The limitations of the study and the implications of these should be acknowledged as part of this process.
- Throughout the thesis, students should link ideas and arguments across chapters, summarising what has gone before and indicating connections with what is to follow.

A good thesis has a strong critical edge. In addition to description of the relevant literature, research project, method and results, student should continually engage in critique. This requires asking questions of themselves, their material and writing:

- Why is this so?
- Where is the evidence in the literature or data to support this?
- How is this assertion supported?
- What connections can be claimed?

A good thesis is of publishable quality. It will demonstrate the hallmarks of excellent writing and professional presentation, features like:

- Clear expression of ideas
- Fluency through its explicit connections within paragraphs, between sections and across chapters
- Logical organisation made obvious by meaningful section and sub-section headings and focused paragraphs with the grammar, syntax, spelling and punctuation of formal academic writing
- Full attention to all relevant academic conventions, especially referencing.

Policy on intellectual property

Background

Intellectual property (IP) relates to original works of authorship, technology, products, processes, designs, plant varieties, goodwill and trade marks. Although intangible, the law recognises IP to be just as much a form of property as land, housing or jewellery. Thus, IP can be sold, leased, damaged and trespassed upon. Since IP is intangible, it is important that its scope and ownership is clearly defined to enable the legal rights of the owner to be enforced. This is made possible with patents, design registrations, trademark registrations, plant variety rights, copyright protection, and recognition of authorship.

It is an important principle that theses should be public documents. Requirements associated with IP should not be allowed to restrict public access to theses without a strong case being made.

University policy

The University's policy with regard to IP, its commercialisation and involvement of students in creating IP is set out in the Handbook on Research and Outside Professional Activities (available from UNILink and departmental offices).

Withholding access to a thesis

In keeping with worldwide academic practice, the University of Waikato endorses the principle that research theses are, by their very nature, available for public inspection. In so doing, it helps to ensure that intellectual developments can be appraised, used, and built upon by all interested parties. To this end, theses that have been passed by the examiners are lodged in the University of Waikato Library. It is usually possible to write a thesis that can be made public based on research and data that may be confidential. The student and supervisor should design their research to that end. However, the University also recognises that in unusual situations, theses contain material that, for commercial or security reasons, should be withheld from the public for a period after the thesis has been completed. An embargo of a thesis is an injunction against the release of the thesis for public consultation in the University Library. This may be granted by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor only in response to a request from the student and his or her supervisor which is endorsed by the relevant department and the Dean of Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education (or nominee):

- If it is pending publication
- If it is pending the filing of a patent
- To allow for a sponsor to comment
- To protect pre-existing commercial secrets of a sponsor
- If there is a pre-existing contractual agreement
- If restriction is necessary under the Privacy Act 1993 or the Official Information Act 1982.

Approval will not normally be granted for any other reasons. Material the student would not wish to be available to the public on grounds other than those above, should not be included in the thesis. An embargo will be approved only for a limited period.

An application for withholding a thesis should normally be made to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor when a student applies for enrolment in the thesis paper. If a student is receiving support from a commercial or government establishment for whom they are carrying out the thesis research then it will usually be clear at the time of registration whether conditions for an embargo are likely to be fulfilled when the thesis is completed.

There are circumstances where the confidential/sensitive nature of the thesis research does not become clear until that research is near completion. For that reason, requests for an embargo may be made up until the time of submission of the thesis for examination. Applications will not be accepted after the thesis is submitted.

When the need for an embargo of a thesis has been identified, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (through the Faculty Academic and Student Administration Office at Reception) and the Manager of the UNILink office should be consulted immediately so that all options can be explored to minimise the extent of any restrictions.

Getting published

Publication is a way of contributing to knowledge production and further development in one's discipline

area. Publication of teaching-related inquiry is also a way of enriching the profession of teaching and working to ensure that students are supported to optimal achievement.

We recommend that any student interested in presenting a paper at a conference or publishing research in a journal should discuss this with their supervisor, who is likely to be experienced in presenting and publishing research. The University Library holds a range of books related to academic publishing.

Submission of the thesis

A student should normally be in agreement with the supervisor about when their thesis is ready for submission and formal examination. If a supervisor still has significant reservations about the thesis when the student is ready to submit, these reservations should be fully explained to the student in writing. The student should be asked to respond in writing where the supervisor considers the thesis is not ready for examination. A supervisor cannot prevent submission of a thesis because of reservations about it, but students should heed their supervisors' recommendations.

Proof-reading

It is important to pay close attention to spelling and grammar. It is also important to allow adequate time to edit and proofread a thesis to get it to a publishable standard, as this is a criterion for writing at this level.

Presentation and binding of the thesis

In 2015 the University of Waikato thesis submission regulations changed to allow students to initially submit a masters thesis in softbound format. Once the thesis has been examined, small editorial changes are permitted to the thesis before the student submits two final hardbound copies of the thesis. These changes are checked by the supervisor prior to final submission.

A thesis must be submitted in the form set out in the Theses and Dissertations Regulations in the *2017 University of Waikato Calendar*. Each bound copy of the thesis must include an abstract of no more than 500 words, immediately following the title page and written in a form suitable for publication. For a sample of the title page, please refer to Appendix 1 on page 92. A downloadable title template can be found in the University of Waikato Library thesis guide, available at: waikato.ac.nz/library/study/guides/thesis-writing This guide provides full details on the requirements for presenting and binding your thesis.

Please refer to the following page for more information.

Printing and binding

Students are advised to allow sufficient time (around five working days) for thesis binding when planning to submit. To ensure that the submission date is met, students should take this binding time into account when planning ahead. We advise that students contact Waikato Print or an appropriate binder early to check how much time should be allowed for binding.

Waikato Print offers thesis printing and binding services. Waikato Print is located in the basement of the Student Union Building. For more information please see: waikato-print.co.nz

Submission

Submission due date

Your thesis must be submitted by 4pm on the last Friday of your masters thesis enrolment. Log into i.waikato.ac.nz to check the dates of your thesis enrolment. Contact the Faculty Administrator - Postgraduate educ_grad@waikato.ac.nz if you have any questions about your submission due date.

Initial thesis submission

By 4pm on the required thesis submission due date, you must:

- Submit a digital copy of the thesis to the University Research Commons (see "Digital Thesis Submission")
- Submit two softbound copies of the thesis to the Student Administration Counter in the University's Student Centre, the Library, along with the following:
 - A completed Deposit of Masters Thesis, Doctoral or MPhil Thesis in the University of Waikato Library Form
 - A Masters Thesis Submission Form (this includes a Supervisor Declaration and an Ethics Declaration)
 - For theses submitted in te reo Māori: A separate thesis abstract in English, including your name, full thesis title, name of degree for which the thesis is being submitted and year of submission.

Once your thesis has been submitted, the Assessment and Graduation Office will forward it to Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education for examination processing.

Please apply to graduate 'In Anticipation' once you have submitted your thesis (see page 21).

Editorial changes after examination

After examination the Assessment and Graduation Office will notify you of your final submission deadline, which is normally three weeks after they receive confirmation of your final grade from the FEDU Postgraduate Office. You may choose to make minor editorial changes before submitting the final, hardbound copies of your thesis.

Your supervisor will check the changes you make to your thesis before final submission to verify that these are only minor editorial changes. Ensure you factor in enough time for having the thesis bound, and checked by your supervisor, prior to submitting the final copy.

Final submission

By 4pm on your final submission deadline you must:

- Submit two hardbound copies of the thesis to the Assessment and Graduation Office, along with the following:
 - A Declaration Form signed by both you and your supervisor, stating that ALL versions of the thesis (softbound, hardbound and digital) are identical, with the exception of minor spelling, typographical and/or formatting errors.

Digital thesis submission

Prior to submitting the thesis, students are required to submit an electronic (digital) copy of their thesis to the University of Waikato Library. Digital copies of thesis completed at the University of Waikato must be deposited directly into the University's Research Commons. Instructions on how to deposit a digital thesis can be found on the Research Commons' website: researchcommons.waikato.ac.nz The Library website

provides students with specific instructions regarding the digital thesis copies.

Examination of the thesis

The process of examination of Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education's masters theses is overseen by the Faculty Academic and Student Administration Office at Reception. Once a thesis is initially submitted, the Assessment and Graduation Office sends two copies to the Faculty Academic and Student Administration Office at Reception for examination processing.

Masters thesis are examined by two examiners, who examine the thesis independently: an internal examiner, and an examiner who is external to the University.

Nomination of examiners

Close to the completion of the thesis, the supervisor will nominate:

- One internal examiner (a staff member from Te Kura Toi Tangata Faculty of Education or another part of the University)
- One external examiner (generally a staff member from another academic institution with research expertise in a discipline relevant to the research).

Examiners normally hold at least a masters degree or have equivalent qualifications or experience.

Persons nominated as examiners for a thesis should not normally be:

- Directly connected with the thesis student or their research
- Associated with any organisation contractually involved with the research covered by the thesis
- Inactive in the field of study covered by the thesis.

It is the supervisor's responsibility to make an initial contact with potential examiners to establish whether they are willing and available to mark the student's thesis. Once an agreement has been received, the supervisor must fill out a Nomination of Examiners Form, available from the Faculty Administrator – Postgraduate educ_grad@waikato.ac.nz.

The Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research assesses and makes the final decision on the nominated examiner's suitability.

Examination process

Once the nomination of examiners is received and approved:

- Both examiners are sent a copy of the thesis, along with a letter outlining the marking criteria and grading scale
- The examiners independently mark the thesis
- The examiners submit their individual examination reports and provide grade recommendations (no conferring between examiners can take place).

Approximately three-four months can be expected to elapse between the submission and a decision on thesis examination results. External examiners are given six to eight weeks to mark a thesis and examination processing and masters degree completion may take additional two to three weeks. Sometimes examiners are able to mark a thesis in a much shorter period of time but this should not be relied upon. Examiners are not paid for marking masters theses and their efforts are a courtesy they extend to the University. It is inappropriate to expect the examiner to put off everything else he or she is doing to mark a thesis, therefore delays in the examination process might be expected.

Judging the quality of a masters thesis

Masters degree students are expected to demonstrate an ability to undertake an appropriate size research project and to evaluate research critically. Research at this level may involve an original research project, well founded in the relevant literature, or an appropriate replication and extension of other work, also selected on the basis of the relevant literature. For the research to be judged excellent the presentation should be excellent and appropriate for the discipline, sound analyses should have been carried out where appropriate, and there should be good integration of the student's work with that in the literature.

Where appropriate, the thesis should contain a critical review of the literature on the subject that leads clearly into the aims and the objectives of the research. Where relevant, the materials and methods used should be set out in sufficient detail so that the work could be repeated by another person. Tables, graphs and figures should be well presented, accurate and concise and suitable techniques used to evaluate the results. Conclusions should be clear and precise. Where appropriate, a final discussion should be included, covering the present results, their relation to previous work, and future investigations.

The thesis should contain information, which contributes to the sum of knowledge or procedures on the subject studied and provides new understanding of the subject with which it deals.

The thesis should be clear, accurate, cogent, and concise. It is to be free of typographical errors, errors of spelling or language construction. The work should be suitably documented and citations correct in every detail.

Assessing the thesis

The examiners will assess the thesis based on the following criteria:

- An assessment of the overall merit of the thesis
- The conceptual framing and literature review
- The adequacy of the research questions
- The research design (eg its suitability vis a vis the research questions)
- The adequacy of the research methods implemented
- The quality of the interpretation of the findings
- The conclusion, implications and/or practical significance of the project
- The standard of writing, referencing and general presentation
- The coherence of the work as a whole.

Examiners, in assessing a thesis, will not give equal weight to each of the criteria specified above. Greatest significance will be given to the quality of the research done, and, where relevant, to the integrity of the methodology used and the student's ability to evaluate his/her own research critically in the context of the relevant literature.

Presentational aspects will be of secondary importance but poor presentation will result in a lower mark. Students presenting theses significantly in excess of the recommended length should note that examiners may give a lower mark if the greater length detracts from the overall quality of the presentation. In exceptional circumstances the Head of School may give permission for the word limit to be exceeded. When this is done it should be documented and the examiners should be advised.

Examiners' reports

These reports will address the criteria for judging the thesis and will include recommended grades. The examiner may not read each other's reports until they have submitted their own examination report. In reporting on the thesis it is expected that the examiners will provide written comments as to the research in general. The Faculty and the University consider these reports, particularly those of external examiners, to be very valuable academic and professional feedback for students. The examiners will be asked to give permission for their report to be released to the student after the examination is completed.

The two reports will usually be made available to the student and supervisor after the examination is completed. Following our usual practice the reports will be copied with the examiners' names and recommended grades obscured.

Final grade and graduation

Once the examination reports have been received, the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research will check them and will make a decision on the final grade and class of honours, taking into the account both examiners' reports and suggested grades. In keeping with best international practice, somewhat greater weight may be given to the external examiner's report.

Resolving grade discrepancies

In the event of a discrepancy between the internal and external examiner's grade recommendations, in the first instance we may consult the two examiners further in order to reach consensus regarding the grade to be awarded. If the grade cannot be resolved to the satisfaction of the Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research, a third examiner or assessor may be sought.

Review of grade

Students believing that a mistake has been made in the process of calculating their final thesis grade may apply for a review of grade. This must be submitted on the prescribed form, together with the prescribed fee, to the Head of Student and Academic Services within 14 days of receiving notification of the grade. The application must be accompanied by all items of assessment for the thesis that have been returned to the student. A review of grade involves finding an independent assessor who will assess the thesis and all items of assessment that contribute to the final grade.

After examination and masters degree completion

- The Associate Dean – Postgraduate Research notifies the student of their thesis result and masters degree completion by letter
- Copies of examiners' reports with examiners names and recommended grades obscured are returned to the student
- Assessment and Graduation Office notifies student of final submission deadline
- Optional: Student makes minor editorial changes to the thesis
- Student arranges for two hardbound copies of the thesis to be printed
- Supervisor checks hardbound copies of thesis. Both student and supervisor sign Declaration Form
- Final submission of two hardbound copies of thesis to Student Centre, Hamilton Campus or Maharia at Windermere in Tauranga
- Where masters degree completion is confirmed the student will be eligible to graduate at the next graduation ceremony, provided the student has applied to graduate.

Graduation Please refer to page 21.