

# Provisions concerning the assessment of theses

## Article 1 – General provisions

1. These regulations apply to the assessment of theses of all study programs within the field of Psychology of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, hereinafter referred to as: the study program.
2. If different rules apply to a specific study program, this will be stated in the relevant article. Deviating rules prevail over general rules.
3. These regulations apply to the assessment of Bachelor's, Master's and Research Master's theses. Where reference is made in this document to a Master's thesis, this also includes the Research Master's thesis.

## Article 2 – Graduation Committee

1. The graduation committee consists of at least two examiners from the study program in question and is composed for the purpose of assessing the thesis and signing the diploma.
2. In addition to the thesis supervisor (who also acts as the first assessor), the graduation committee consists of at least a second assessor. The second assessor is not involved or has not been involved in the actual supervision of the thesis research. Within the possibilities of a staff of teachers, which is often small in size compared to the number of theses to be assessed, the aim is to choose the second assessor in such a way that both assessors have as few shared interests as possible, for example, in the field of research. In addition, their substantive expertise should, where possible, overlap as little as possible. These measures are designed to promote the independence and quality of judgements. At least one of the assessors must have obtained the UTQ, unless one of them is not obligated to obtain this qualification.

## Article 3 – Thesis supervisor and first assessor

1. The thesis coordinator (the course coordinator of the thesis) appoints the thesis supervisor on the basis of expertise and availability, to be determined in consultation with the thesis supervisor's manager.
2. A thesis supervisor for a Master's thesis has at least obtained a doctoral degree. A thesis supervisor for a Bachelor's thesis is at least a PhD candidate. Thesis supervisors are appointed as examiners within the meaning of Article 2 of the rules and guidelines of the Examination Boards of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Examination Board reserves the right to make an exception with regard to the required level of the thesis supervisor.
3. The thesis supervisor has the task of guiding the student in the research and writing of the thesis. The thesis supervisor also ensures that the thesis primarily represents the student's work. The maximum number of feedback moments between the thesis supervisor and the student is therefore limited to seven for the Bachelor's thesis. In the case of the Master's thesis, there is a maximum of five feedback moments.
4. The thesis supervisor is also the first assessor and is therefore responsible for the communication between the assessors, the full completion of the assessment forms, the passing on of the final grade to the thesis coordinator, and informing the student about the final grade and the substantiation thereof. The archiving of the file relating to a particular Bachelor's or Master's thesis is regulated in Article 9.

#### Article 4 – Second assessor

1. The thesis coordinator appoints the second assessor and does so in consultation with this person's manager.
2. A second assessor of a Master's thesis is at least entitled MSc or drs. A second assessor of a Bachelor's thesis is at least entitled MSc or drs, unless the thesis supervisor is a doctoral candidate; in that case, the second assessor must be at least promoted. Second assessors are appointed as examiners within the meaning of Article 2 of the rules and guidelines of the Examination Boards of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences. The Examination Board reserves the right to make an exception with regard to the required level of the second assessor.
3. In accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2, the second assessor is not involved or has been involved in the supervision of the thesis, and is sufficiently distant from the thesis supervisor.
4. The second assessor may come from a different study program, but must have sufficient expertise to be able to make a valid assessment. This is to be assessed by the thesis coordinator.
5. The second assessor forms his opinion without having taken note of the opinion of the thesis supervisor. Likewise, the thesis supervisor forms his opinion without having taken note of the opinion of the second assessor.

#### Article 5 – Assessment form

1. When assessing a thesis, use is made of an assessment form drawn up by the Examination Board and drawn up in consultation with the Academic Directors and the university assessment expert.
2. The assessment criteria on the assessment form are derived from the thesis objectives and learning outcomes of the study program.
3. The assessment form is published on the Tilburg University website.
4. The assessment form must be made available to students before the start of work on the thesis.
5. The assessment form takes the form of a rubric. The thesis objectives are translated into assessment criteria and each criterion is assessed separately on a scale ranging from 4 to 10. Each criterion has its own weighting factor. The grade of each assessor is the unrounded sum of the assessments of the individual criteria, with the application of the corresponding weighting factors, whereby only the first assessor assesses the 'Work Attitude' section. The final grade is calculated in accordance with Article 6, paragraph 2. For each criterion there is room for feedback to the student and to explain the given final grade. This feedback is mandatory.
6. A sufficient final assessment can only be given if an individual assessor has assessed a maximum of one of the criteria with a score of 5 and all other criteria have been assessed with a score of 6 or higher. Both assessors are allowed to give a maximum of one 5 each on one of the criteria. If at least one of the two assessors gives two or more 5s or at least one of the assessors a grade below 5 on a criterion, no compensation is possible with sufficient assessment on other criteria, which always leads to an insufficient final grade.
7. When assessing both Bachelor's and Master's theses, the generally applicable rules for academic publications are adhered to. Theses are assessed on the basis of the following components/criteria: Research Question, Title and Abstract, Introduction, Method Results, Discussion, Editorial Quality and Work Attitude.
8. The following applies to Bachelor's theses. If it concerns an empirical research or an adaptation of existing data, paragraphs 1 to 7 of this article apply. If it concerns a literature

review, a case study or an observation study, then adjusted criteria apply. The assessment form takes this into account.

9. The assessment scale is fixed and cannot be changed, unless the Examination Board decides to do so.
10. On the assessment form, an assessor must provide all criteria with an assessment. In the case of incomplete assessment forms, it is not possible to give a final assessment.

#### Article 6 – Assessment procedure

1. The thesis supervisor and the second assessor assess the thesis independently of each other. Both assessors fill in the assessment form independently of each other, and each give a grade.
2. Individual assessors will award a score on the scale of 4 to 10 for each criterion. The grade given by an individual assessor is the unrounded weighted average of the grades given for each criterion, whereby the second assessor does not assess the 'Work Attitude' criterion. The final grade based on the thesis supervisor's and the second assessor's grades is determined by taking the (unweighted) average of the two grades and rounding it off to the nearest whole or half grade. The rounding rules as laid down in Article 23, paragraph 3 of the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Boards TSB are used for this purpose.<sup>1</sup>
3. Prior to determining the assessment, each thesis must be entered in the appropriate plagiarism scanner. If the resulting report shows a strong suspicion of plagiarism, the thesis supervisor follows the procedure as described by the Examination Board on the university's intranet. Any other suspected forms of fraud must also be reported to the Examination Board.
4. Once the final assessment form has been drawn up, the thesis supervisor informs the student of the final grade and its substantiation and provides the student with the two assessment forms of the thesis supervisor and the second assessor.

#### Article 7 – Conflicting assessments

1. The assignment of a final grade is postponed, if:
  - a. the difference between the unrounded grades of the two assessors is at least 1.5;
  - b. the final grade is at least 9;
  - c. one of the assessors has awarded an insufficient grade, while the other has awarded a sufficient grade.
2. If the awarding of a final grade has been postponed, the thesis supervisor shall inform the thesis coordinator accordingly. The thesis coordinator then appoints a different person as a third assessor. The third assessor needs to have the rank of senior lecturer or professor. The third assessor assesses the thesis himself, fills in his own assessment form that is the same as that of the second assessor, receives the two completed assessment forms and awards a reasoned final grade. This final grade is binding, except in the situation described in paragraph 3. The thesis supervisor is informed and completes the assessment procedure by adding the third assessor's assessment form to the file. The thesis supervisor provides the student with the third assessor's assessment form including his argumentation for the particular final grade, as well as the two other assessment forms.

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<sup>1</sup> Two examples are given below for clarification purposes. The two assessors gave the incomplete grades of 6.57 and 7.63 respectively. The sum is equal to 14.2 and divided by 2, this gives the incomplete final grade of 7.1. After completion, the final grade is a 7. This is the grade that is communicated to the student. For the not rounded grades 6.83 and 7.92, the sum is 14.75, the not rounded final grade is 7.375, and the rounded final grade is 7.5. This is the grade that is communicated to the student.

3. If the third assessor gives a final grade that is not between the nearest rounded whole or half grades of the thesis supervisor and the second assessor or that is equal to one of these grades, the third assessor, the thesis supervisor and the second assessor, but at least the third assessor and the thesis supervisor, will discuss with each other with the objective of jointly establishing a final grade. If this proves to be impossible, the Examination Board will be informed. The Examination Board sets up a binding assessment procedure on a case by case basis.

#### Article 8 – Re-examination

1. If the final grade is set at an insufficient grade, the student will be given the assessment forms, so that it is clear which aspects of the thesis he needs to improve. The student must submit the improved version of the thesis for re-assessment within two weeks.
2. If the final grade is insufficient, the student must make a completely new thesis on a new subject.
3. If a student wishes to resit a thesis whose final grade is set at a sufficient grade, the student must write a new thesis on a new subject.

#### Article 9 - Archiving

1. The Academic Director is responsible for the correct archiving of the items relating to the thesis laid down in paragraph 2. He may delegate this task, for example to the secretariat of a department.
2. The following must be kept together:
  - a. the thesis;
  - b. the assessment form of the thesis supervisor;
  - c. the assessment form of the second assessor;
  - d. the final grade;
  - e. if a third assessor is involved, the third assessor's assessment form shall also be kept;
  - f. in the event of a situation as described in Article 7.3, the documentation involved in the procedure will also be archived
3. The retention period for the documents referred to in Article 9,2 is seven years.
4. Personal data are involved in the retention of theses and the associated documents. This data processing is necessary to comply with a statutory obligation and has been recorded in Tilburg University's processing register.