

# Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences

## Psychology Study Programs

### Provisions Regarding the Assessment of Theses

#### Article 1 - General provisions

1. These Provisions apply to the assessment of theses from all the psychology study programs of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences, hereinafter referred to as "the program," and form an integral part of the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Boards of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences.
2. If different rules apply to a specific program, this will be stated in the article concerned. Deviating rules prevail over general rules.
3. These regulations apply to the assessment of both Bachelor's, Master's and Research Master's theses, as referred to and described in the relevant Education and Examination Regulations. Where in this document reference is made to a Master's thesis, this also refers to a Research Master's thesis.

#### Article 2 - Thesis Committee

1. The Thesis Committee consists of at least two examiners of 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 first assessor), the Thesis 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. Within the possibilities of a lecturing staff that 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. If possible, their substantive expertise should also overlap as little as possible. These measures are intended to promote the independence and quality of the assessments. At least one of the assessors should have the UTQ, unless one of them is not obliged to have obtained the UTQ.

#### Article 3 - Thesis coordinator

1. The thesis coordinator is the course coordinator of the thesis and not, at the same time, the Academic Director of the program the thesis is a component of.
2. The thesis coordinator designates the thesis supervisor on the basis of expertise and availability, to be determined in consultation with the thesis supervisor's manager.
3. The thesis coordinator appoints the second assessor, in consultation with his/her manager.
4. The thesis coordinator is responsible for determining the grade of the thesis on the basis of the assessment forms of the first and second assessors, unless the thesis coordinator is also an assessor of this thesis. In the latter case, the Academic Director takes over the responsibility of determining the grade of thesis in accordance with the appropriate procedure.
5. The thesis coordinator is also responsible for initiating the procedure after conflicting assessments (Article 8), the resit procedure (Article 9), and the archiving of the assessment products (Article 10).

#### Article 4 - Thesis supervisor and first assessor

1. A thesis supervisor of a Master's thesis should at least hold a PhD. A thesis supervisor of a Bachelor thesis should at least be a PhD researcher. Thesis supervisors are appointed as examiners in the sense of Article 2 of the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board 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.
2. The thesis supervisor's task is to guide the student through the research and writing of the thesis. The thesis supervisor also ensures that the thesis mainly represents the student's work. For the Bachelor's thesis, the maximum number of feedback moments between the thesis supervisor and the student is therefore limited to seven. The Master's thesis has a maximum of five feedback moments.
3. The thesis supervisor forms his/her opinion without having taken note of the opinion of the second assessor and then sends the completed assessment form to the thesis coordinator.
4. After the grade has been determined by the thesis coordinator, the thesis supervisor communicates the grade to the student, and provides feedback on the assessment as presented in the thesis assessment forms.

#### Article 5 - Second assessor

1. A second assessor of a Master's thesis should at least hold the title MSc. A second assessor of a Bachelor's thesis should at least hold the title MSc, unless the thesis supervisor is a PhD researcher. In that case, the second assessor should at least hold a PhD. Second assessors are appointed as examiners in the sense of Article 2 of the Rules and Guidelines of the Tilburg School of Social and Behavioral Sciences Examination Board. The Examination Board reserves the right to make an exception with regard to the required level of the second assessor.
2. In accordance with Article 2, paragraph 2 of these Provisions, the second assessor is not involved or has not been involved in the supervision of the thesis and functions at sufficient distance from the thesis supervisor.
3. The second assessor may come from another study program, but must have sufficient expertise to make a valid assessment. This is at the discretion of the thesis coordinator.
4. The second assessor forms his/her opinion without having taken cognizance of the thesis supervisor's assessment and then sends the completed assessment form to the thesis coordinator.

#### Article 6 - Assessment form

1. When assessing a thesis, use is made of an assessment form established by the Examination Board, which has been drawn up in consultation with the Academic Directors and the university's assessment specialist.
2. The assessment criteria on the assessment form are derived from the thesis objectives and the final attainment levels of the program.
3. The assessment form is published on the Tilburg University website.
4. The assessment form must be made available to students prior to commencing work on the thesis.
5. The assessment form has 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, with the grade 5.5 not to be used. This method of assessment corresponds to the "grades system" customary in the Netherlands. Each criterion has its own weighting factor. The grade of each assessor is the unrounded sum of the assessments of the individual

criteria, applying the corresponding weighting factors, with only the first assessor assessing the 'Work Attitude' section. The final grade is calculated in accordance with the provision in Article 7 paragraph 2 of these Provisions. For each criterion there is room for feedback for the student and to explain the final grade given. This feedback is mandatory.

6. A sufficient final assessment will only be given if an individual assessor has assessed a maximum of one of the criteria with a 5 and has assessed all other criteria with a 6 or higher. Both assessors may each give a maximum of one 5 on one of the criteria. If at least one of the two assessors gives two or more fives, or at least one of the assessors gives a grade lower than a 5 on one criterion, no compensation will be possible with a sufficient score on other criteria, and there will always be an insufficient final score.
7. When assessing both a Bachelor's thesis and a Master's thesis, the generally applicable rules for scientific publications are adhered to. Theses are assessed on the following components/criteria: Research Question, Title and Abstract, Introduction, Method Description, Results, Discussion, Editorial Quality, and Work Attitude.
8. The assessment form cannot be changed, unless the Examination Board decides so.
9. On the assessment form, an assessor must provide all criteria with an assessment. Incomplete assessment forms do not allow a final assessment to be given.

#### Article 7 - Assessment procedure

1. The thesis supervisor and the second assessor assess the thesis independently. Both assessors fill out the assessment form independently of each other, give a grade each, and send the assessment form to the thesis coordinator.
2. The grade given by an individual assessor is the unrounded weighted average of the grades given per criterion, with the second assessor not rating the Work Attitude criterion. The final grade calculated from the thesis supervisor's and the second assessor's grades is determined by the thesis coordinator by taking the (unweighted) average of the two grades and rounding it off to the nearest whole or half grade. In doing so, the rounding rules are used as laid down in Article 23, paragraph 3 of the Rules and Guidelines of the Examination Board TSB.<sup>1</sup>
3. Prior to establishing the grade, each thesis should be entered into the appropriate plagiarism scanner. If the resulting report shows a strong suspicion of plagiarism, the thesis supervisor follows the procedure described by the Examination Board on the university's intranet. Any other suspected forms of fraud should also be reported to the Examination Board.
4. After the final assessment form has been drawn up, the thesis coordinator informs the thesis supervisor of the final grade and its substantiation and provides the two assessment forms to the thesis supervisor.

#### Article 8 - 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 a 9;
  - c. One of the assessors came to an insufficient grade, while the other assessor gave a sufficient grade.

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<sup>1</sup> To clarify, here are two examples. The two assessors gave the unrounded grades of 6.57 and 7.63 respectively. The sum is equal to 14.2 and divided by 2 gives the unrounded final grade of 7.1. After rounding, the final grade is a 7. This is the grade given to the student. For the unrounded grades 6.83 and 7.92 the sum is 14.75, the unrounded final grade is 7.375, and the rounded final grade is 7.5. This is the grade communicated to the student.

2. When the awarding of a final grade is postponed, the thesis coordinator informs the student, the thesis supervisor, and the second assessor. The thesis coordinator then appoints another person as the third assessor. The third assessor has the rank of associate professor or full professor. The third assessor assesses the thesis him/herself, fills out his/her own assessment form that is the same as that of the second assessor, then 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 coordinator is informed and completes the assessment procedure by adding the assessment form of the third assessor including his/her argumentation for the final grade to the file. The thesis coordinator provides the assessment form of the third assessor, including his/her argumentation for the final grade, and the two other assessment forms to the student, the thesis supervisor, and the second assessor.
3. In the event that the third assessor gives a final grade that is not in between the closest completed whole or half grades of the thesis supervisor and the second assessor or is not 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 consult with a view to jointly determining a final grade. If they do not succeed, the Examination Board will be informed. The Examination Board will set up a binding assessment procedure on a case-by-case basis.

#### Article 9 - Resit

1. If the final grade is determined to be a fail, the student receives the assessment forms so that it is clear which aspects of the thesis he/she needs to improve. The student must submit the improved version of the thesis within two weeks of receiving the assessment forms for re-assessment by both the thesis supervisor and the second assessor, or the third assessor.
2. The thesis supervisor and second assessor use the second assessor's form (without "Work Attitude") to review the improved version of the thesis. If a third assessor has assessed the thesis, the third assessor will also review the improved thesis using the same form as the second assessor. If not, the improved thesis will be assessed in the usual manner by the thesis supervisor and second assessor. After the assessment, an assessor sends the assessment form to the thesis coordinator.
3. The thesis coordinator determines the final grade on the basis of one or two assessment forms, with the maximum grade for the improved thesis being equal to a 6. If the final grade is insufficient, the student must write a completely new thesis on a new topic.
4. When a student wants to resit a thesis for which the final grade has been determined to be a pass, the student must write a completely new thesis on a new subject.

#### Article 10 - Archiving

1. The thesis coordinator is responsible for the correct and complete archiving of the matters relating to the thesis laid down in paragraph 2. He/she may delegate this task, e.g. to the secretary's office of a Department but remains responsible for archiving.
2. The following should be archived 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. in case a third assessor is involved, the assessment form of the third assessor is also archived;

- f. in case of a situation as described in Article 8, paragraph 3, the documentation involved in that procedure is also archived.
  - g. in the event of a resit, both the first thesis and at least the accompanying thesis assessment forms are retained, as well as the improved thesis and the thesis assessment forms.
3. The storage period of the documents referred to in Article 10, paragraph 2 is seven years.
  4. Personal data are involved in the storage of theses and accompanying documents. This data processing is necessary to comply with a legal obligation and is recorded in the Tilburg University processing register.

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