The degree of Master (by research) may be awarded by Academic Senate on the recommendation of the Higher Degree Research Committee solely on the results of the examination of a thesis. On occasion, a thesis is only part of the academic work completed by the candidate. The proportion of work attributed to a thesis appears approximately half-way down the page in Part I of the examiner's report form.

Three levels of postgraduate research degrees are awarded at Macquarie University:
(a) Degree of Doctor of Philosophy
(b) Honours Degree of Master (Master of Philosophy from 2006)
(c) Degree of Master

Normally admission to (a) and (b) requires a bachelor honours degree at the minimum of Class II Division 1 and Class II Division 2 respectively (i.e. a background in research).

Admission to (c) in most instances is from a pass (3 years) undergraduate degree containing a major in an appropriate discipline but generally without substantial research experience.

The main objective of a Master's degree is to provide further academic work beyond the bachelor's degree, in some instances directed towards professional application. It is expected that candidates graduating with this degree will have demonstrated, as well as other skills, a capacity to undertake and satisfactorily report independent supervised research commensurate with their undergraduate background.

In some cases work done conjointly with others may be accepted provided that the thesis is structured to show clearly the explicit contributions of parties involved.

A candidate may not submit as the main content of the thesis any work or material previously submitted for any degree but may incorporate that work or material in the thesis if the candidate specifies the work or material which has been so incorporated.

Candidates have been instructed that a thesis should be written as concisely as possible. The limit suggested is up to 80,000 words for a thesis in the humanities or social sciences and up to 50,000 words for those in sciences.

The University requires that postgraduate research be supervised, and the name of a candidate's supervisor appears at the top of the examiner's report form. Supervisors do not act as examiners. They are invited to report to the Committee on a candidate's performance but are not required to do so. A candidate may submit a thesis for examination against a supervisor's advice.

Professional contact between candidates and examiners might be expected but examiners should not have been involved in a supervisory role in the preparation of the thesis, as in the reading of draft thesis material. Examiners may consult other examiners about a thesis should they consider it desirable. Examiners may make a conjoint report if they wish, however this occurs rarely.

Examiners are invited to retain the thesis for their personal use unless otherwise advised by the Higher Degree Research Office. A claim for postage may be submitted.

It is expected that examiners will be able to complete their examination and submit reports within six weeks of receipt of the thesis. Reports may be faxed ((61 2) 9850 6198), e-mailed (hdrexam@vc.mq.edu.au) or posted to the Higher Degree Research Office. To minimise delays, it is most helpful if examiners fax or e-mail their report and return the original documents in the mail.
The criteria on which a thesis at this level is to be evaluated are as follows:
(a) That it has adequately delineated the topic of concern in the context of current knowledge from the perspective of theoretical and/or professional positions.
(b) That it has satisfactorily linked empirical outcomes or new evaluations with the relevant literature.
(c) That it is satisfactory as regards its literary presentation.

Comment is sought from the examiner as to publishable content of the thesis. This is for information only and should not affect the decision on the award of the degree.

Examiner's report forms contain two parts.

Part I provides for a summary judgement on the thesis and requests one of a number of possible recommendations. Part I of the report is normally confidential to the Higher Degree Research Committee. Examiners should be aware that it is likely that this part of the report would be released to the candidate if requested under Freedom of Information legislation.

Part II is your report to the candidate. Please state concisely but explicitly the grounds on which the recommendation is based, indicating the strengths and weaknesses of the thesis. This should be in sufficient detail for candidates to gain clear understanding of your opinion of their work and the means by which your conclusions were reached.

Where further work is required, please indicate clearly those revisions and/or corrections which you wish to see made. Supplementary sheets may be attached. On completion of the examination, a copy of Part II of your report identifying you as the author will be released to the candidate.

Before making a recommendation, an examiner may request further information from the candidate. This can be arranged by contacting the Higher Degree Research Office.

Recommendations, as summarised on Part I of the Examiner Report Form.

When all examiner's reports are to hand, comments are sought from the candidate's supervisor for the information of Higher Degree Research Committee.

After considering all reports the Higher Degree Research Committee may, in general:
(a) recommend the award of the degree;
(b) require that corrections to the thesis to the satisfaction of the University be carried out by the candidate before the award of the degree;
(c) require that the candidate undertakes further study and research, and resubmits the thesis for re-examination by one or more examiners;
(d) in the event of marked disagreement amongst examiners, appoint a further examiner, moderator or adjudicator; or request that an oral examination be held;
(e) recommend that the degree be not awarded.

Under the University rules, it is the Academic Senate which determines that a candidate has satisfied the requirements for award of the degree.

Higher Degree Research Office
February 2006