

**WHAT EXAMINERS DO: WHAT
THESIS STUDENT SHOULD
KNOW**

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What examiners do: what thesis students should know

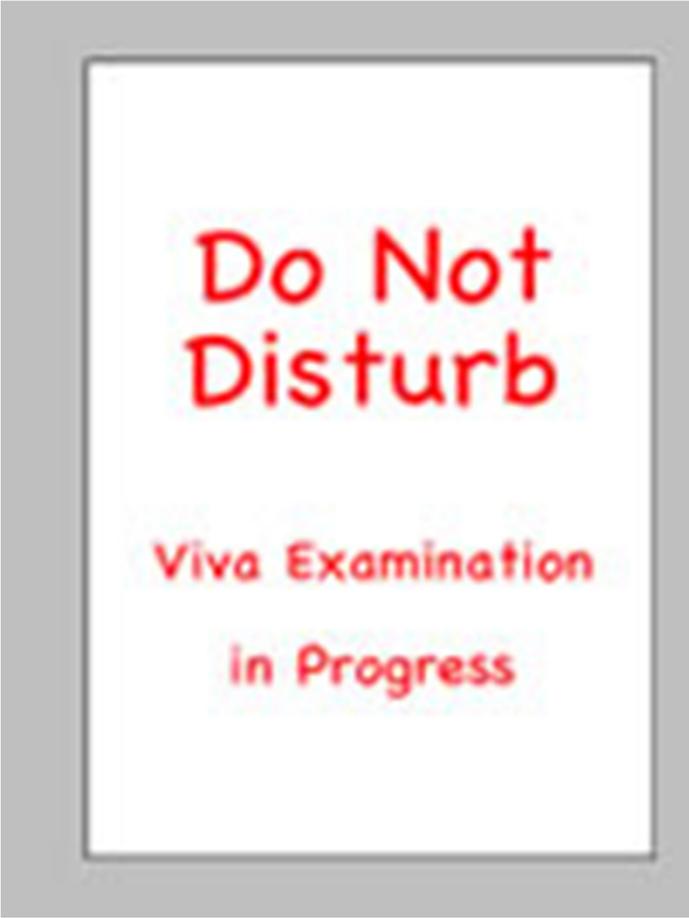
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TIPS 1: EXAMINERS TEND TO BE BROADLY CONSISTENT

- Surprisingly, studies found that examiners tend to be broadly consistent despite differences in institutional instruction, discipline, nationality, level of degree or the experience of examiners.

A rectangular sign with a white background and a thin black border, set against a grey background. The text is in red. The top line reads 'Do Not Disturb' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below it, in a smaller font, are the words 'Viva Examination' and 'In Progress' on two separate lines.

Do Not
Disturb

Viva Examination
In Progress

TIPS 2: EXAMINERS EXPECT THESIS TO PASS

- Most examiners consider a thesis a pass until it is proven a fail, and will only consider failing a thesis if there are significant errors or omissions that threaten the credibility of the research.

Less than 1%
examiners
recommend
a fail.



TIPS 3: EXAMINERS JUDGE A THESIS BY THE END OF FIRST OR SECOND CHAPTER

- Examiners make initial judgment about the quality of thesis after reading the first two chapters and sometimes while they skim the abstract, table of contents, introduction and conclusion.



TIPS 4: EXAMINERS READ A THESIS AS AN ACADEMIC AND NORMAL READER

- **A thesis must be enjoyable to read.**
- **It must meet examiner's academic and normal reader expectation.**

TIPS 5: EXAMINERS ARE IRRITATED AND DISTRACTED BY PRESENTATION ERRORS

- Lead to poor impressions for thesis examiners.
- Examiners become distracted, irritated, frustrated and agitated by frequent presentation errors.



TIPS 6: EXAMINERS FAVOUR A COHERENT THESIS

- Coherent writing with focus, flow and a logical and explicit structure that integrate and connect parts the thesis.
- Examiners also equate coherence with a convincing argument.



TIPS 7: EXAMINERS FAVOUR THESIS THAT ENGAGES WITH THE LITERATURE

- **Examiners look for thesis that analyse, interpret, categorise , order or apply the literature to draw new insights and conclusion.**
- **A pass require coverage and a working understanding of the literature; but, for a good thesis candidate must critically engage with the literature.**

TIPS 8: EXAMINERS FAVOUR A THESIS WITH A CONVINCING APPROACH

- A candidate must convince examiners that the approach they adopted is appropriate.
- A well explained and justified approach, with clear acknowledgements of strengths and possible limitations, is important.

Structure of a
Persuasive Essay



TIPS 9: EXAMINERS FAVOUR THESIS THAT ENGAGES WITH FINDINGS

- Examiners favour thesis that thoroughly engages with the findings, rather than merely listing what was found.
- A candidate must interpret, analyse and critically appraise their findings, draw conclusions and show the conclusions of the research



TIPS 10: EXAMINERS GIVE SUMMATIVE AND FORMATIVE FEEDBACK

- Examiners make judgement about the quality of a thesis but they also offer constructive, formative feedback about how to improve.



CONCLUSION

- Thesis examiners tend to be broadly consistent in their practices and recommendations.
- They expect and want a thesis to pass and they are unwilling to recommend a fail. But, first impressions count, and as they begin to read, they will quickly make up their mind whether a thesis is likely to be high or low quality.
- They will read with academic expectations and the expectations of a normal reader. Like any reader, they get annoyed and distracted by presentation errors, and they want to read a thesis that is a coherent whole, not a series of unrelated points.
- As academic readers, they favour a thesis that engages with the literature, has a convincing approach, analyses and engages with the findings, and which is publishable. In fact, being publishable and making a contribution to the literature are the most important things that examiners look for.
- When they have finished, they give not only a final evaluation of a thesis, but also instruction and advice to improve the thesis and any further publications and research.
- We hope that these generalisations will shed light on the often secret process of assessing a thesis, and reassure, guide and encourage students as they write their theses.