

## **Examination of the BEd Honours Thesis**

### Standards for research

Abraham Kaplan argues that attention must be paid to standards of professional competence that govern the conduct of any inquiry which will allow judgements that a researcher is “doing well” in carrying out a research activity. These standards may be seen as involving the researcher in issues that are at a more general level than concerns with specific research types. Given that there will be variation in the fields of the BEd honours thesis investigations it is important that assessment of theses be carried out using a common framework. For this reason we have identified a set of principles and practices that supervisors and students can use in carrying out the thesis project and in preparing the thesis report. These standards will also provide a framework that can be used to compare the quality of all the thesis reports.

### Significance

- Is the topic for the thesis of significant educational value?
- Has this significance been clearly established?

### Specification of the research topic

- Is the topic for the thesis clearly specified
- Have the research questions been stated in a way that they can be answered?
- Are the background assumptions made by the researcher specified?
- Do these assumptions guide the research questions and methods in a coherent fashion?
- Have basic terms been defined clearly?

### Relationship to existing research

- Has the relationship between the thesis topic, or the research question, and previous research been established in a suitable manner?
- Has the topic been linked clearly to related thinking in the field of educational research?

### Research procedures

- Were the research techniques or procedures suitable for answering the research questions?
- Have these procedures been described in sufficient detail?
- Was the research plan practicable given the available time and budget?
- Have the research techniques been applied in a competent manner?
- Has awareness of the ethical dimensions of the research been demonstrated?

### Discussion and Conclusions

- Are the conclusions sound and well justified?

- Is the explanation of findings theoretically tenable and does it consider both what is, and what is not, confirmed by the findings.
- Have the implications of, and possible applications for, the findings been identified and discussed?
- Have the limitations of the research procedures and findings been identified?

#### The thesis argument

- Does the thesis show evidence of critical evaluation of ideas and findings?
- Is the overall argument in the thesis developed in a coherent manner?
- Is there evidence of insight/creativity on the part of the student.

#### General Presentation

- Are the findings reported in a format that is generally accessible to the educational community and appropriate for the field of research?
- Is the writing style clear and concise?
- Have the sources of literature used in the project been referenced in an appropriate manner?

## Grading

The BEd Honours thesis will be graded using five categories. First Class(H1), Second Class Division A(H2A), , Second Class Division B(H2B), Third Class(H3), Fail(F).

The following descriptions are suggested as guides for making judgements about the grade assigned to the thesis. Examiners should also assign a percentage mark to the thesis.

### H1 (High distinction)

Theses given this ranking approach a standard that would be applied to publishable research in the relevant field of research. Although the student may not have achieved all of the aims of the project to the same level of excellence, it is possible that a thesis may be given this grade if it rates well against the following elements. The more evidence of these elements the higher the rating for the thesis. The thesis provides evidence of a potential for future research excellence.

- The thesis rates highly when judged against each of the broad standards for research listed above. A thesis that is excellent in almost all respects would not be downgraded because of a minor weakness.
- The overall argument presented in the thesis is coherent
- There is evidence of complex argument and abstract thinking.
- There is evidence of a strong critical, reflective capacity.
- The student has been able to consider issues of conceptual importance to the project and has generalised beyond the immediate context of the thesis in a convincing manner. This extension could include consideration of areas of further research.
- There is evidence of creative and original argument that organises ideas in a novel way, or identifies novel applications of ideas or practices central to the thesis topic.
- The major aims of the thesis project have been achieved in an appropriate manner.

### H2A(Distinction)

This thesis rates reasonably well when judged against the research standards and the elements listed for H1. It is a generally sound piece of research. Although it may display an element of originality or creativity in design of the thesis, or in discussion of the findings, the elements of the argument are not as well integrated, or are not as well developed as in the case of a H1 . Even though the thesis has some weaknesses, none of these bring into question the central conclusions or basic significance of the work. The thesis suggests that the student could undertake postgraduate research at a competent level.

- The thesis rates highly when judged against each of the broad standards for research listed above.
- The overall argument presented in the thesis is coherent.
- There is evidence of complex argument and abstract thinking.
- There is evidence of a critical, reflective capacity.

### H2B(Credit)

This thesis rates reasonably well when judged against the research standards and the elements listed for H1 and H2A. It is a generally sound piece of research. However, in this case, there are two features of the thesis that are different from the H1 thesis. First, there is little evidence that the student has gone beyond the level of argument in the field to display an element of originality or creativity in design of the thesis, or in discussion of the findings. In addition there is at least one area listed in the research standards where the thesis contains a major weakness. It may be that the argument for the thesis is not well developed, or that a significant limitation has not been convincingly treated.

- The thesis rates reasonably well when judged against each of the broad standards for research listed above, though there is significant weakness in one or more of these standards.
- The overall argument presented in the thesis is not fully developed.
- There is evidence of complex argument and abstract thinking.
- There is evidence of a critical, reflective capacity.

### H3(Pass)

This thesis rates poorly in several areas when judged against the standards of research listed above. There is evidence of significant weakness in these areas that have not been treated in a convincing manner.

- The thesis rates poorly on several of the broad standards for research listed above.
- The overall argument presented in the thesis is not fully developed, nor is it integrated in a manner that gives it coherence.
- There is little evidence of complex argument and abstract thinking.
- There is little evidence of a critical, reflective capacity
- There is little evidence of transformation of ideas by the student. Sources used in the thesis are listed rather than used in the service of an argument

### Fail

Under normal circumstances we should not expect to see a thesis that would be given this grade. Such a thesis rates poorly on most of the research standards listed above. The weaknesses in the thesis are ones that compromise the project to a substantial extent and could not be retrieved without major rethinking of the design of the project, or a further round of data gathering and analysis.

## **Calculation of Honours Classifications**

The following are the methods adopted in the Faculty for calculation of Honours degree classifications

### **First Class Honours**

- Either (a) an overall average of 85% or more;  
Or (b) a mark of 85% or more in at least 18 units of work, with an overall average not less than 81%.

### **Second Class Division A**

- Either (a) an overall average of between 75% and 84% inclusive;  
Or (b) a mark of 75% or more in at least 18 units of work, with an overall average not less than 73%.

### **Second Class Division B**

an overall average of between 65% and 74% inclusive.

### **Third Class**

an overall average of between 50% and 64% inclusive.

### **Fail**

an overall average of less than 50%.