

STANDARDS FOR PHD AND MASTER'S THESIS AND MASTER'S PROJECT.
Language Academy, Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, Universiti Teknologi
Malaysia

All postgraduate students in any programme or mode of study at the Language Academy are required to engage in research activities within their postgraduate studies. All student research activities involve a substantial piece of individual work undertaken with guidance from a designated supervisor. The expectations on the depth of research vary between the different levels and modes of the programme. Below are the other research activities available for the different degrees and modes of postgraduate programmes:

Degree/ mode	Research Activity
Master (Taught Course)- MLCDC	Master's Project
Master (Research)	Master's Thesis
PhD (Research)	PhD Thesis

Master's Project

Research Study or Master's Project is the final project for the taught course master's degree. It is an advanced research project of a defined scope and length. Those pursuing a taught course master's degree must perform research on a specific topic that demonstrates the knowledge acquired through their program.

A master's project is more closely related to a research project that you would have completed during your undergraduate degree but more critically and in-depth. It should demonstrate your critical and analytical thinking level and define the subject you are most interested in pursuing within your field. A good master's project is proof that the candidate understands and is able to apply the knowledge and skills of their field, research methodology and data analyses. A master's project is not required to be an original contribution to knowledge, though it may be. A master's project is typically between **80 -100 pages**.

In Master Project I, students complete a minimum of 3 chapters (proposal) which should cover discussions about the research problem, literature review and methodology. The student's proposal is assessed only by the student's supervisor(s). Master Project II is the continuation of Master Project I, and the complete report of the master's project is assessed by the student's supervisor(s) and two examiners (lecturers from within the student's programme). Grades for Master Project I and II are counted in the student's CGPA.

Master's Thesis

A master's thesis needs to be completed to fulfil the requirements for a pure research master's degree (MPhil) award. A master's thesis differs from a master's dissertation regarding the depth of research and the extent of the literature covered. The literature review should be extensive and reflect the scholarship of learning in the student's research topic and the student's field of study.

The assessment for a master's thesis is much more rigorous than a master's dissertation. A master's thesis would require a more in-depth and critical analysis of the current literature related to the student's research topic. A master's thesis enriches the body of knowledge of the field of education through analysing, applying, clarifying, critiquing, and interpreting the specific body of knowledge concerned. The recommended length of a master's thesis is **between 50,000-60,000 words** (MQA Education Program Standard, 2015) or **200-250 pages, including an appendix.**

A master's thesis is also assessed at two stages via oral evaluations: 1) proposal defense and 2) viva voce. The proposal assessment will involve at least two internal examiners, but an external examiner will also be involved in the viva voce. Proposal assessment and viva voce cannot be taken in the same semester.

PhD Thesis

Similar to a master's thesis, a PhD thesis also requires the demonstration of extensive academic research and the evidence of capacity for critical analysis in the student's field. However, a PhD thesis must also consider the expectation of originality in the field and the input of relevant new information or ideas to the field of study (contribution to knowledge). The literature review of a PhD thesis should be exhaustive. The research of others serves as a guide to coming up with a completely new hypothesis. Academic requirements for a PhD thesis, especially the demand for originality, are much higher than for a master's thesis. A PhD thesis must contribute something completely new and undiscovered to the student's field. The general criteria in assessing a master's thesis are applied in evaluating a PhD thesis, but much more rigorously. A PhD thesis is assessed specifically against the basic requirement that a PhD thesis is an original contribution to knowledge. Usually, a PhD thesis covers a broader field or at least shows a greater perspective than a master's thesis. One would expect a PhD candidate to show an awareness of fundamental theoretic problems directly or indirectly relevant to his or her or her particular topic. The authority underlying the thesis (the extent to which candidates reveal extensive and intensive knowledge of their subject) is another criterion implicit in one's assessment of a doctoral candidate and a pointer to the quality of such a candidate's scholarship. PhD candidates must present a significant piece of research; this will be interpreted as requiring some stature, breadth, and conviction in a literary argument. A PhD thesis is usually at least double the length of a master's dissertation or thesis, with the recommended length of **80,000 (minimum) to 100,000 words or 300-350 pages, including an appendix.**

**GUIDELINE FOR WHAT MUST BE INCLUDED IN A PROPOSAL REPORT
(Applicable for Master’s thesis and PhD thesis- Full Research students)**

The objective of proposal assessments is to ensure that students are heading in the right direction in their research. Besides assessing whether students have reached the level expected for a certain level of study, a proposal assessment also serves as a platform for students. To improve and strengthen their research.

The assessment of a proposal is based on the proposal report and the student's oral defence. Students should be able to explain their research well in writing and/or orally (the expectations for each content are listed below.)

A student's proposal can be written and submitted following the standard of **30-40 pages** as endorsed by the faculty JKA.

*The content in this table is used as a guideline for examiners and supervisors to refer to. However, it should be reminded that **not all aspects of this table are compulsory**. A proposal is a work in progress, and students are required to show capability, potential and evidence to write some aspects/parts shown in the table.*

Content	Expectations
Title	Must reflect the research in one concise statement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not exceeding 15 words - No abbreviations or semi-colons etc - Involve all main variables
Chapter 1	
Introduction	General view of the focus area of study <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretical perspectives/approaches, - Context, - Purpose of study (in brief)
Background of Study	Argument leading to the research problem <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Review of previous studies to identify the research gap / the research problem - Contextualising the study using the Wh-questions of 'what', 'when', 'where', 'why', and 'who' as a guide. - Current issues - Evidence and support (data)
Statement of Problem	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discuss in detail the research gap/research problem

Research Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Must relate to the background - Must be focusing on the research context - Objectives should be viable and measurable (quantitative) / do-able
Research Questions	Matched with the objectives of the study and must be written in question forms
Hypothesis	It depends on the requirement of the research (for quantitative research)
Assumption	Based on theoretical perspectives of the thesis (for qualitative research)
Significance of the study	Contribution of the study to the researched population/people involved in the study, stakeholders, area(s) of study or knowledge discipline
Scope of the study	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Scope: the areas and parameters of the study - sampling, location/place of research/statistical methods (quantitative research)
Theoretical and conceptual framework	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Theoretical framework and/or conceptual framework is optional (based on discipline) - Must relate to the research objectives and be aligned with the research questions used in the study
Definition of terms	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All variables/constructs studied must be defined: conceptual and operational definitions for each word/phrase. - Operational; definitions of variables must align with the theory and instrument used in the study
Chapter 2	
<p>Preview and review of related literature:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Further discussions on main concepts/ variables ● Discussions of relevant theories/ models - particularly the ones that are used in the theoretical framework / conceptual framework ● Review of previous research related to the objectives of the current study ● Literature must include recent publications unless the studies are significant/rare. ● Must be able to demonstrate the ability to critically analyse the literature ● Must explain the gap/problem of the study clearly 	

Chapter 3	
Research approach	<p>Explain the research approach used:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Qualitative or - Quantitative or - Mixed method
Research design	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explanation and justification of the research design used - The research design should be able to lead to an investigation that can answer the research questions.
Population and sample (for quantitative)	<p>Descriptions and justifications of population, number of samples and sampling method</p> <p>OR</p>
Participants(for qualitative)	<p>Descriptions and justifications of participants involved, number of participants and selection method</p>
Instrumentation (for quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Instrument(s) used - Instruments/tools/inventory/intervention program <p>OR</p>
Data collection (for qualitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Data collections used
Data collection procedure	<p>The steps taken in data collection.</p>
Data analysis	<p>Explanation and justification of the technique of analyses planned to be used to answer the research questions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Software/tools planned to be used (for quantitative) - An analytical framework to be used (for qualitative) - Unit of analysis (optional)
Validity and reliability (for quantitative)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Write briefly (optional)
OR	
Credibility and trustworthiness (for qualitative)	
AND	

Ethical considerations	
Research planning (optional)	Planning of research until completion - A Gantt chart (duration) is recommended

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