

**University of Lapland  
Faculty of Social Sciences**

**Master's Thesis Evaluation Criteria**

A Master's Thesis is graded on a seven-step scale from highest to lowest as follows: *laudatur*, *eximia cum laude approbatur*, *magna cum laude approbatur*, *cum laude approbatur*, *non sine laude approbatur*, *lubenter approbatur*, or *approbatur*. The monograph thesis and the article-based thesis have their own evaluation criteria. The evaluation criteria for these two types of thesis are, to a large extent, similar. In the present document, a description of the typical quality of achievement associated with each grade is provided. A grade proposal is made by identifying the grade description that is the closest match to the quality of achievement demonstrated in the thesis. However, not every thesis is expected to include all the elements presented in the grade description. It is also worth bearing in mind that emphases may vary according to the field of study and type of thesis. In addition, one grade description may encompass many different kinds of theses. In particular, on the border between two grades, differences may be only slight, in which case the overall impression is decisive. No thesis is perfect. Minor shortcomings regarding one aspect of the thesis may be compensated for by successful performance on some other aspect.

The Master's Thesis examiners will pay attention to the following aspects of the work:

- formulating the research task / problem and its logical implementation (the research topic, previous research on the phenomenon under study, a clear research question, use of theoretical and analytical concepts, defining the scope and structure of the study > framework/model, discussion, conclusions, novelty value and generalizability, significance of the results)
- conducting the study (data collection and analysis methods, reliability of data, research ethical questions)
- formal issues (clear and logical presentation, quality of the written presentation, fluency and clarity of language, quality of the scientific writing, use of references)

Evaluation criteria for the monograph Master's Thesis

*Laudatur*

The research topic is more demanding than the average Master's thesis topic and the work demonstrates the author's profound familiarity with the field. The significance of the topic of the thesis to the field in question and to the related fields has been clearly indicated. The research is clearly linked with previous research on the subject, the selected research literature is highly relevant to the research topic, and the bibliography is more substantial and extensive than that of the average Master's thesis. The theoretical framework and the set of concepts used are skilfully defined and well justified. The research task/research problem setting brings fresh and innovative perspectives into the subject and is of considerable theoretical, practical or social significance. Collection and treatment of empirical data have been carried out with great care, thoroughness and insight. The selected analysis methods are relevant to the research problem at hand and the thesis demonstrates the author's ability to further develop and evaluate the selected methods independently. The thesis demonstrates elements of critical research. The versatile discussion demonstrated by the thesis is indicative of the author's ability to become thoroughly familiar with and to organize the subject matter, and to conduct and report scientific

research. The research results are of scientific value and the research is publishable as is or with minor revisions as a scientific publication. The thesis is written in high-quality academic prose and meets the ethical requirements set for research.

*Eximia cum laude approbatur*

The research subject is demanding and the work demonstrates the author's profound familiarity with the scientific discourse of the field. Reorganization and synthesis of theory and existing research literature have been carried out in a manner that presents new perspectives into the research subject. The objectives of the research are well justified and defined and skilfully linked to the theoretical background of the thesis. The thesis demonstrates elements of independent, critical and innovative research and the author's ability to organize and manage extensive theoretical and empirical sets of data and research problems as well as to conduct a demanding empirical study. The methodological choices and methods are well thought out and well justified. The data collection method and the analysis conducted demonstrate the author's own insight. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been addressed. The research contributes new scientific knowledge to the field. The thesis meets the formal, layout and language requirements set for research.

*Magna cum laude approbatur*

The topic of the thesis or the perspective on the topic is interesting and related to a significant research question independently posed by the author. The research task is clearly defined, well justified and linked to the theoretical background presented in the thesis. The set of concepts used are clearly defined. The introduction, the theoretical framework and the research problem setting demonstrate a good level of theoretical or practical familiarity with the subject area. The source literature is of central relevance to the subject at hand. The choice of sources and the dialogue with and between them are indicative of the author's ability to conduct critical research. The data collection and analysis methods are relevant to the research task and data and well justified. The author's interpretation of the results and conclusions drawn are logical and well justified. The methodological choices or the application of the results demonstrate a fresh and insightful approach. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been addressed. The author demonstrates the ability to examine the research topic in a comprehensive manner. The author demonstrates familiarity with scientific practice and the thesis meets the formal, layout and language requirements set for an academic thesis.

*Cum laude approbatur*

Either the research topic or the chosen approach to it is rather conventional in the field. The thesis is properly contextualized and the theoretical background presented in the thesis demonstrates the author's familiarity with previous research on the subject. The sources selected are relevant to the research problem at hand. The link between the research task and previous research has been identified and made explicit in the thesis. The theoretical framework and the manner in which the research task at hand emerges from and relates to previous research have been addressed. The methodological choices are justified, although in a rather cursory or conventional manner. The author's interpretation of the results is good and demonstrates the author's attempts to establish dialogue between theory and empirical analysis. The reliability of the results and the research process is evaluated in an appropriate manner. The concluding discussion points out connections to the problem setting and the theoretical background of the thesis. The results are evaluated and avenues for further research on the subject are proposed and possibilities of application of the results are pointed out. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been taken into consideration. The formal components of the thesis are nearly impeccable and the language used is good.

### *Non sine laude approbatur*

The research subject is conventional or widely researched in the field. Theories and results of previous research related to the subject at hand are discussed in the thesis, but they are presented in a list-like and mechanical manner. The scope of the relevant background information about the research subject may be too narrow/too wide, illogical, or poorly defined. The starting points and the research task and research problems of the study at hand have been discussed and attempts have been made to link them with previous research, but without clear success. The sources cited are sufficient, but not all of them are relevant or some relevant sources are missing. The author demonstrates a rather good command of the research method, but methodological choices are discussed by merely summarizing the methodological research literature and not by linking them to the study at hand. The results are presented in a rather mechanical manner, but the conclusions are, at least to some extent, appropriately placed in the context of previous research or practical needs. Establishing links between the results and theoretical background or practical application of the research, as well as critical evaluation of the results, remain to some extent insufficient. However, the conclusions include reference to possibilities of future research. Ethical issues pertaining to research are not sufficiently discussed. The language used in the thesis is clear, although some of the formal components of the work have inadequacies.

### *Lubenter approbatur*

Some aspects of the thesis clearly exceed the *approbatur* level, although there may be shortcomings regarding some other aspects of the work. The subject chosen for the thesis is unsuccessful or the author has not conducted the research in a successful manner. The purpose of the research at hand is discussed to some extent, but its connection to previous research on the subject remains unclear. The theories and studies referred to in the thesis remain unconnected with each other and are only loosely linked to the research problem at hand. The concepts have been defined in an insufficient and list-like manner. The research methods are inconsistently applied and no research justification for the selected methods has been provided. Data collection has been discussed to some extent, but discussion of analysis methods is cursory or missing. The data have not been completely analyzed and the reliability of the data is not discussed. Presentation of the results is insufficient or has inconsistencies. The conclusions consist of a summary of the research, i.e. the author merely repeats what has been done. Ethical issues pertaining to research are not sufficiently discussed. There is some structural deficiency in the thesis and the language used is not completely fluent.

### *Approbatur*

The *approbatur* level thesis meets the minimum criteria for the approval of an academic thesis. The thesis has been designed and written independently and in adherence to the ethical norms of research. The thesis demonstrates mastery of at least one of its aspects, although it may contain even severe insufficiencies regarding some other aspects. The subject chosen for the thesis is unsuccessful or the author has not conducted the research in a successful manner. The purpose, objectives and concepts of the research may be missing or remain unclear. The research questions are poorly articulated, no sufficient research justification is provided for them, and the research problems addressed are not connected to the theoretical background of the research. The theoretical background of the research is insufficient. The source literature is of low relevance and quality. The methodological choices and data analysis demonstrate clear shortcomings. The data set is small or narrow in scope or it has not been utilized. The results are presented in a list-like manner without commentary or evaluation. Conclusions and discussion are almost completely missing or are extremely cursory. The language used is poor. There are shortcomings regarding the structure of the thesis, referencing and presenting bibliographic information.

### Evaluation criteria for the article-based Master's thesis

An article-based Master's thesis consists of one scientific article authored by the candidate that has been submitted for peer-review to a peer-reviewed scientific journal, or in the thesis supervisor's view, meets the requirements of such a journal, or has already been published as a scientific publication / meets the requirements of scientific publication, and an introductory part (15 – 20 pages) describing and reflecting on the research process. When evaluating an article-based thesis, aspects such as the peer-review process, the publication status of the article, and the status of the publication channel in the field of research may be taken into consideration. However, the grade awarded for an article-based Master's thesis is not directly dependent on the level of the publication channel or the publisher's decision to accept or reject the article, but evaluation is carried out by examiners appointed by the faculty. As is the case with the monograph Master's thesis, not all the elements included in the grade description are expected to be present in every article-based thesis.

#### *Laudatur*

The research topic is more demanding than the average Master's thesis topic and the work demonstrates the author's profound familiarity with the field. The significance of the topic of the thesis to the field in question and to the related fields has been clearly indicated. The research is clearly linked with previous research on the subject, the selected research literature is highly relevant to the research topic, and the bibliography is more substantial and extensive than that of the average Master's thesis. The theoretical framework and the set of concepts used are skilfully defined and well justified. The research task/research problem setting brings fresh and innovative perspectives into the subject and is of considerable theoretical, practical or social significance. Collection and treatment of empirical data has been carried out with great care, thoroughness and insight and it has been presented with clarity and analytical skill in the introductory part of the thesis. The selected analysis methods are relevant to the research problem at hand and the thesis demonstrates the author's ability to further develop and evaluate the selected methods independently. The thesis demonstrates elements of critical research. The versatile discussion demonstrated by the thesis is indicative of the author's ability to become thoroughly familiar with and to organize the subject matter, and to conduct and report scientific research. The research results are of scientific value and the research is publishable as is or with minor revisions as a scientific publication. The thesis is written in high-quality academic prose and meets the ethical requirements set for research. The discussion presented in the introductory part of the thesis is profound, deals with some independent themes, and is seamlessly linked to the article. The article part of the thesis has been published in a high-profile scientific publication, or is currently undergoing a scientific peer-review process of such a publication.

#### *Eximia cum laude approbatur*

The research subject is demanding and the work demonstrates the author's profound familiarity with the scientific discourse of the field. Reorganization and synthesis of theory and existing research literature have been carried out in a manner that presents new perspectives into the research subject. The objectives, concepts and problematic of the research are well justified and defined and skilfully linked to the theoretical background of the thesis. The thesis demonstrates elements of independent, critical and innovative research and the author's ability to organize and manage extensive theoretical and empirical sets of data and research problems as well as to conduct a demanding empirical study. The methodological choices and methods are well thought out and well justified. The data collection method and the analysis conducted demonstrate the author's own insight. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been addressed. The research contributes new scientific knowledge to the field. The thesis meets the formal, layout and

language requirements set for research. The discussion presented in the introductory part of the thesis is profound, deals with some independent themes, and is clearly linked to the article. The article part of the thesis has been published in a high-profile scientific publication, or is currently undergoing a scientific peer-review process of such a publication.

*Magna cum laude approbatur*

The topic of the thesis or the perspective on the topic is interesting and related to a significant research question independently posed by the author. The research task is clearly defined, well justified and linked to the theoretical background presented in the thesis. The set of concepts used are clearly defined. The introduction, the theoretical framework and the research problem setting demonstrate a good level of theoretical or practical familiarity with the subject area. The source literature is of central relevance to the subject at hand. The choice of sources and the dialogue with and between them are indicative of the author's ability to conduct critical research. The data collection and analysis methods are relevant to the research task and data and well justified. The author's interpretation of the results and conclusions drawn are logical and well justified. The methodological choices or the application of the results demonstrate a fresh and insightful approach. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been addressed. The author demonstrates the ability to examine the research topic in a comprehensive manner. The author demonstrates familiarity with scientific practice and the thesis meets the formal, layout and language requirements set for an academic thesis. The discussion presented in the introductory part of the thesis is profound and clearly linked to the article. The article part of the thesis has been published, is currently undergoing a scientific peer-review process of a high-profile scientific publication, or could be submitted for publication to such a publication.

*Cum laude approbatur*

Either the research topic or the chosen approach to it is rather conventional in the field. The thesis is properly contextualized and the theoretical background presented in the thesis demonstrates the author's familiarity with previous research on the subject. The sources selected are relevant to the research problem at hand. The link between the research task and previous research has been identified and made explicit in the thesis. The theoretical framework and the manner in which the research task at hand emerges from and relates to previous research have been addressed. The methodological choices are justified, although in a rather cursory or conventional manner. The author's interpretation of the results is good and demonstrates the author's attempts to establish dialogue between theory and empirical analysis. The reliability of the results and the research process is evaluated in an appropriate manner. The concluding discussion points out connections to the problem setting and the theoretical background of the thesis. The results are evaluated and avenues for further research on the subject are proposed and possibilities of application of the results are pointed out. Ethical issues pertaining to research have been taken into consideration. The formal components of the thesis are nearly impeccable and the language used is good. The introductory part of the thesis presents a rather general description of the research process but does so with adequate precision. The article part of the thesis has been published, is currently undergoing a scientific peer-review process of a scientific publication, or could be submitted for publication to such a publication.

*Non sine laude approbatur*

The research subject is conventional or widely researched in the field. Theories and results of previous research related to the subject at hand are discussed in the thesis, but they are presented in a list-like and mechanical manner. The scope of the relevant background information about the research subject may be too narrow/too wide, illogical, or poorly defined. The starting points and the research task and research problems of the study at hand have been discussed and attempts have been made to link them with previous research, but without clear

success. The sources cited are sufficient, but not all of them are relevant or some relevant sources are missing. The author demonstrates a rather good command of the research method, but methodological choices are discussed by merely summarizing the methodological research literature and not by linking them to the study at hand. The results are presented in a rather mechanical manner, but the conclusions are, at least to some extent, appropriately placed in the context of previous research or practical needs. Establishing links between the results and theoretical background or practical application of the research, as well as critical evaluation of the results, remain to some extent insufficient. However, the conclusions include reference to possibilities of future research. Ethical issues pertaining to research are not sufficiently discussed. The language used in the thesis is clear, although some of the formal components of the work have inadequacies. The linkage between the introductory part of the thesis and the article part has inadequacies. The article part of the thesis, with minor revisions, can be submitted for publication to a scientific publication.

#### *Lubenter approbatur*

Some aspects of the thesis clearly exceed the *approbatur* level, although there may be shortcomings regarding some other aspects of the work. The subject chosen for the thesis is unsuccessful or the author has not conducted the research in a successful manner. The purpose of the research at hand is discussed to some extent, but its connection to previous research on the subject remains unclear. The theories and studies referred to in the thesis remain unconnected with each other and are only loosely linked to the research problem at hand. The concepts have been defined in an insufficient and list-like manner. The research methods are inconsistently applied and no research justification for the selected methods has been provided. Data collection has been discussed to some extent, but discussion of analysis methods is cursory or missing. The data have not been completely analyzed and the reliability of the data is not discussed. Presentation of the results is insufficient or has inconsistencies. The conclusions consist of a summary of the research, i.e. the author merely repeats what has been done. Ethical issues pertaining to research are not sufficiently discussed. There is some structural deficiency in the thesis and the language used is not completely fluent. The linkage between the introductory part of the thesis and the article part has inadequacies. The article part of the thesis, with major revisions, can be submitted for publication to a scientific publication.

#### *Approbatur*

The *approbatur* level thesis meets the minimum criteria for the approval of an academic thesis. The thesis has been designed and written independently and in adherence to the ethical norms of research. The thesis demonstrates mastery of at least one of its aspects, although it may contain even severe insufficiencies regarding some other aspects. The subject chosen for the thesis is unsuccessful or the author has not conducted the research in a successful manner. The purpose, objectives and concepts of the research may be missing or remain unclear. The research questions are poorly articulated, no sufficient research justification is provided for them, and the research problems addressed are not connected to the theoretical background of the research. The theoretical background of the research is insufficient. The source literature is of low relevance and quality. The methodological choices and data analysis demonstrate clear shortcomings. The data set is small or narrow in scope or it has not been utilized. The results are presented in a list-like manner without commentary or evaluation. Conclusions and discussion are almost completely missing or are extremely cursory. The language used is poor. There are shortcomings regarding the structure of the thesis, referencing and presenting bibliographic information. The linkage between the introductory part of the thesis and the article part has inadequacies. The article part of the thesis meets the formal criteria of a scientific article, but in terms of its content, the article does not merit publication in a scientific publication.