

# ***THE EVALUATION OF DOCTORAL THESES***



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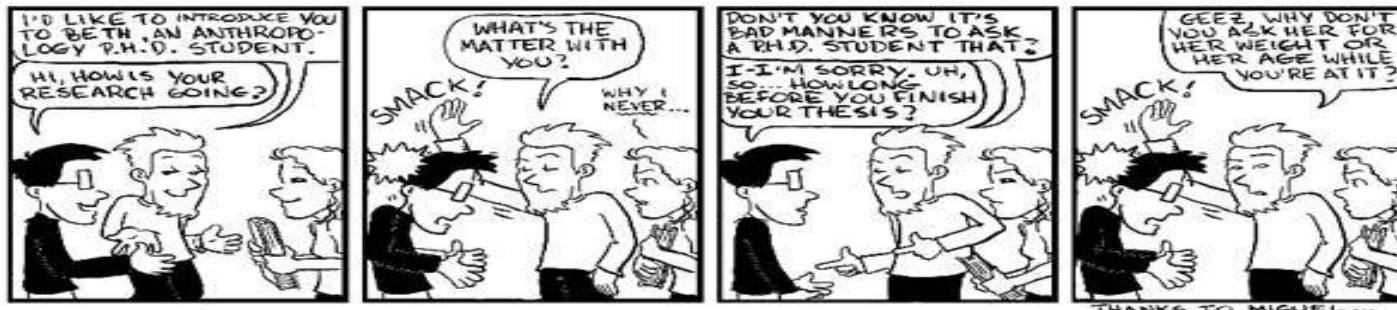
# DOCTORAL RESEARCH THESES

## A SUBSTANTIAL & ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE

*“the university establishes procedures with the aim of ensuring the quality of theses in terms of formulation and the evaluation process.”*

*“the doctoral thesis will be evaluated in a viva to be held publicly .. and the examiners will issue a report and award an overall grade to the thesis accordingly”*

Spanish legislation -Royal Decree 1393/2007 September 29<sup>th</sup>.

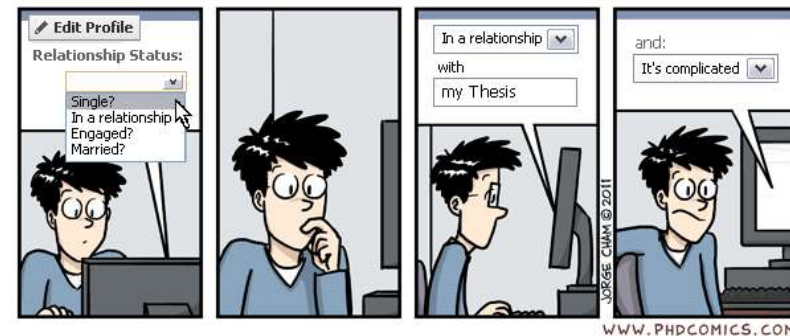


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# ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS REPORT

## 1. ASSESSMENT LINKED TO RESEARCH GROUP/TEAM

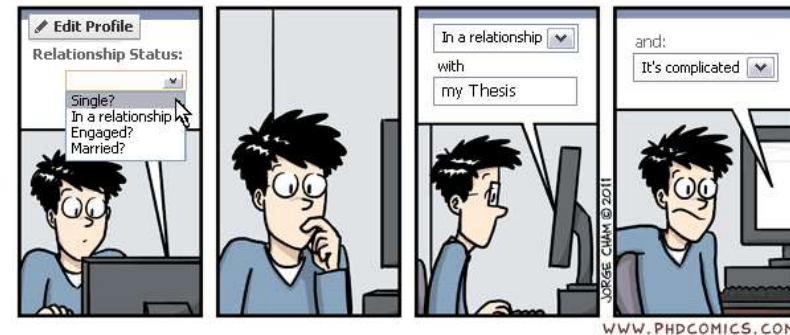
- a) The entire process of thesis writing – from the development of the project to the writing of the thesis be supervised by research group or team made up of at least three competent researchers in the field of knowledge involved.
- b) External examiners/investigators appointed together with the supervisor – to ensure the quality of the writing process as well as the quality of the results obtained.



# ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS REPORT

## 2. ASSESSMENT LINKED TO PRE-READING SESSION OF THE THESIS

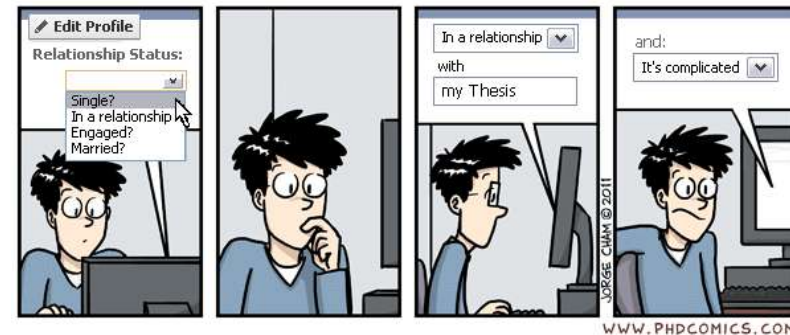
- a) For well established universities, once the thesis is completed, the doctoral candidates perform one same presentation for all the research specialists in the group or institutes so that the student can receive feedback in the form official thoughts, opinions, and suggestions on their work.
- b) Evaluation procedure consists of complementing the pre-reading session with the mandatory reports of two external independent examiners.



# ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS REPORT

## 3. ASSESSMENT BY MEANS OF EXTERNAL EXPERTS'

- a) For various universities has established as a prerequisite for a thesis acceptance to proceed that one to two external (field experts) from outside the country or university plus one internal examiners issue their reports.
- b) Weak points: appointment system of the examiners, their competence and anonymity, criteria for completion of assessment, interrelated of the reports and etc..

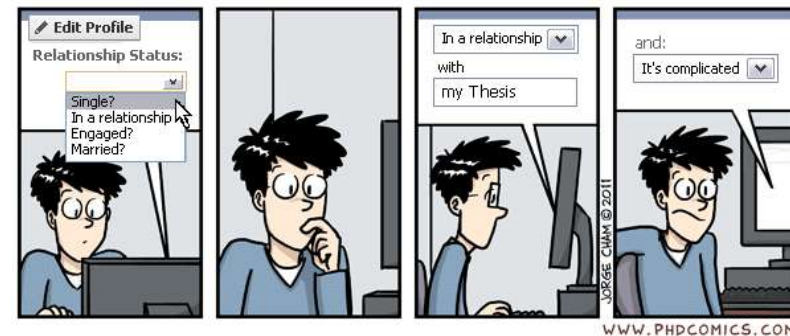




# ASSESSMENT OF THE DOCTORAL THESIS REPORT

## 4. ASSESSMENT LINKED TO SPECIFIC CRITERIA OF QUALITY

- a) Established a preliminary requirement such that to grant a favorable report in this initial evaluation when the doctoral candidate has published two or more works on the thesis topics in a fully refereed journals, or has presented papers and/or attended congresses or conferences related to the related scientific field.
- b) For various universities has established as a prerequisite for a thesis acceptance to proceed that one to two external (field experts) from outside the country or university plus one internal examiners issue their reports.



# DEFENSE OF A DOCTORAL THESIS

- Examiners to make an individual assessment prior to viva according to their beliefs about parameters that such a piece of scientific work must meet.
- Examiners to assess the thesis by focusing on the points that are less clear or are open to debate.
- Doctoral candidate's ability to communicate the contents of his/her work clearly and rigorously, using appropriate language of the field of study as well as any graphic materials so as to get the message across to the examiners.

“ The defense of a doctoral thesis constitutes a fundamental part of academic process, whose purpose is to confirm the competence of the doctoral student ”



# FINAL JUDGEMENT

- Confidence and independence
- Creative view of the topic
- The structure of the argument
- The coherence (link) of theoretical and methodological perspectives
- Evidence of critical self-assessment by the student





## THESIS PRESENTATION AND CLARITY

- The examiner should be able to read the text without difficulty.
- The text should be clear and ‘tell a story’.
- The submission should be ‘user friendly’. The examiner should be able to find his/her way around the submission, locating tables and figures, and able to cross-reference with ease. A numbering system for chapters, sections, and, sometimes, paragraphs can be very helpful.
- The style should be without unnecessary duplication or repetition.
- The bibliography and/or reference list should be complete and accurate.
- It should be possible to gain easy access to tables and figures relating to particular passages in the text, and to examine both data and commentary without effort.

## CRITERIA FOR ASSESSING PhD THESIS

1. THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
2. THE SPECIFICATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY
3. THE ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS
4. THE ASSESSMENT OF THE REPORT SUBMITTED AS A THESIS

# THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
CLARITY OF THE PROBLEM	What is the problem under investigation?
	Does it satisfy the required characteristics to be considered a scientific investigation?
	Is it formulated in an appropriate and clear form?
	Are the concept and objectives specified correctly?
	Does it have a good theoretical basis or foundation?
ORIGINALITY	Is it original work?
	Which sources of data and information are resorted to?
	Was a good review of the literature made?
	Is it up to date?
	Does it relate to the current knowledge up to the present time?
	Are new methods/procedures presented?

## THE STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
PERTINENCE (APPLICABILITY)	Is it pertinent to carry out this type of investigation at this time and in this context?
	Does it register along the lines of the doctoral program?
RELEVANCE	Is it relevant for doctoral program?
	Does it address an important problem from a scientific point of view?
	Will it contribute useful knowledge?
	Does it respond to important current demands?
	Is it adequately justify?

# METHODS OF RESEARCH USED

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
ADEQUATE METHODOLOGY	What research methods are used?
	Does a connection between the theoretical framework and the methodology exist?
	Is it adequately justified?
	Is it written in the most coherent (rational) way for what it is trying to say?
	Does it introduce some new contribution?
CORRECT SPECIFICATION	Are the design, the variables, the samples, the procedures for collecting data, and the data analysis techniques presented in a detailed and sufficient manner?
	Are all the steps specified in correct manner?
	Do the instruments have reasonable levels of reliability and validity?



# METHODS OF RESEARCH USED

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
UNGENEROUS APPLICATION	Is the methodology applied in ungenerous form?
	Are the investigative procedures specified step by step?
	Is the process of data analysis thorough?
	Does it present all the necessary data to justify the conclusions?
REPLICABLE (copy) METHOD	Is it replicable?
	Can the design and procedure that were used be replicated with other projects?
	Are there other works that exist that can be used as a reply?
	Are these works cited?

# ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
UNDERSTANDABLE RESULTS	What results and conclusions support the thesis?
	Are they presented in an adequate manner?
	Are they understandable?
	Are they warranted from the obtained data?
	Do they answer the proposed concepts and objectives?
	Is there a disagreement with the conclusions?
SIGNIFICANCE	Are they important for the development of knowledge?
	Do they reaffirm or contradict previous knowledge?
	Do they contribute to the resolution of specific problems?

# ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
ORIGINALITY	From a theoretical and methodological point of view, are they novel?
	Are they presented in a critical manner?
	What are the limitations of the study?
	Does it propose other outstanding issues for investigation
USEFULNESS	Can they be useful?
	For whom will they be useful?
	Should it be published?
	Does it carry out proposals and recommendations useful for immediate application?

# FORMAL ASPECTS OF THE REPORT

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
CLARITY	Are the contents presented in a clear form?
	Is the report well written?
	Is the style appropriate?
	Does it have an adequate structure?
	Are the data, the tables and the graphs that are included easily understandable?
PRECISION	Is there internal consistency between the theory and the practice?
	Is the report thorough?
	Is it elaborated in a systematic form?
	Is scientific language used?

# FORMAL ASPECTS OF THE REPORT

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
DOCUMENTATION	Is it well cited?
	Does it specify the sources used?
	Does it include up-to-date references?
	Are the quotations and references important or related?
	Do they match the text?
ADJUSTED TO SCIENTIFIC STANDARDS	Does the report have adequately formal presentation?
	Does the thesis satisfy the necessary conditions to be considered a scientific works?
	Does the writing conform to the norms of scientific works?
	Is it publishable?



# EVALUATION OF THE PRESENTATION & ORAL DEFENSE

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
CLARITY OF THE PRESENTATION	Has the content of the work been presented in clear and understandable manner?
	Have the fundamental aspects of the work been stressed?
	Did the technical means used contribute effectively to the presentation that was made?
ADEQUACY OF THE DEFENSE	Has the doctoral candidate expressed openness to criticism and relevant comments made by the panel?
	Has he/she answered all of the theoretical and methodological questions posed in relation to his/her work?
	Were the responses adequate and correct?

# EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT

CRITERIA	QUESTIONS
SCREENING IN THE FIELD OF RESEARCH	Are the new lines of research on the problem under investigation proposed?
	Does it contribute interesting methodologies for researchers?
	Has the thesis had an impact in other projects or investigation?
	Have new valuable models/tools been generated to be implemented in other projects?
CONTRIBUTIONS TO SCIENTIFIC KNOWLEDGE	Is there any sort of dissemination of the work at scientific level: publication, seminars etc..
	Is there any expectation of publishing?
	Has any kind of model or patent been generated?
	What impact can be expected from the contributions advanced by the thesis?

# COMMON TYPES OF EXAMINER COMMENTS

EXAMINER COMMENT	HIGHER QUALITY	LOWER QUALITY
<b>CONTRIBUTION</b>		
ORIGINALITY	... highly original and thought-provoking.	It is hard to see anything new or original about this thesis.
SUBSTANCE	... impressive scholarly contribution, rich in insight....	The reader is eventually left with the feeling of 'so what?'
	... A major contribution to the discipline of ...	Although sound methodologically, there is little of substance in this thesis.
IMPACT	Provides a helpful formula for advancement of knowledge in the field.	... conclusions, potentially misleading to practitioners.
	Practitioners will welcome the guidance	...not likely to have practical outcomes
<b>LITERATURE</b>		
COVERAGE	The literature review is most comprehensive and probably definitive.	The now quite rich literature on the topic of (X) to enhance ..... is represented by only 2 articles
USE & APPLICATION	There is clear evidence that the literature has been fully consulted and understood.	... fails to recognize useful and reject non-useful research ..
	...thoughtfully and carefully analyzed the literature, and integrated it where appropriate.	It is rare to find a reference in this thesis that has been critically appraised.
		... has not engaged adequately with a body of relevant knowledge.

# COMMON TYPES OF EXAMINER COMMENTS

EXAMINER COMMENT	HIGHER QUALITY	LOWER QUALITY
<b>LITERATURE</b>		
ACCURACY	... scholarship that is carefully and accurately summarized	This is not what the author concluded – in fact the opposite.
		... an extremely misleading interpretation which needs to be corrected.
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>		
APPROPRIATENESS	Methodologically the thesis is impressive, evidencing insightfulness, originality and sensitivity.	The method chosen is quite inappropriate as a means of approaching the research question.
	The methodology is well-justified, sound and clearly described.	...there clearly are better ways of addressing the issues...
APPLICATION	.... High level of perceptiveness and acumen in using the materials to draw out appropriate and interesting insights and conclusions.	... offers no critical analysis of the information presented.
	...always an appropriate method, fully justified...	... understanding of the methodology used seems to be fundamental, at best.

# COMMON TYPES OF EXAMINER COMMENTS

EXAMINER COMMENT	HIGHER QUALITY	LOWER QUALITY
<b>PRESENTATION</b>		
COMMUNICATION & LOGIC	Cogent (convincing) and straightforward.... Easy to read... occasionally eloquent (fluent).	It was not at all clear what the aim of the study was ....
	All the necessary steps in the argument supporting this essential point were made crystal clear.	There was no logical flow in several places leading to poor communication of ideas.
GRAMMAR & EXPRESSION	Almost flawless (right) expression and presentation	... so careless and error ridden as to almost defy interpretation.
	Perhaps the most error free thesis I have ever read.	I gave up on correcting expression after the first 20 pages.



## FINAL SUBSTANTIVE JUDGEMENT

- THE STUDENT'S CONFIDENCE AND INDEPENDENCE;
- ORIGINALITY AND CREATIVE VIEW OF THE TOPIC (OWN WORK);
- THE STRUCTURE OF THE ARGUMENT;
- THE COHERENCE OF THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVES;
- EVIDENCE OF CRITICAL SELF-ASSESSMENT BY THE STUDENT;
- CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE (EQUAIVALENT IN QUALITY AND QUANTITY OF PUBLICATIONS); AND
- CLEAR RESEARCH PROBLEM (THE LITERATURE REVIEW SHOULD REVEALED SOME QUESTIONS OR ISSUES WHICH CALL FOR FURTHER INVESTIGATION)

## CONCLUSION

*“A PhD IS A BEGINNING INTO A RESEARCH CAREER.  
MUST HAVE ABILITY TO DEMONSTRATE HIS/HER CAPABILITY FOR INDEPENDENT AND CRITICAL THINKING.”*

## REFERENCES

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- 2) de-Miguel, Mario, *The evaluation of doctoral thesis, a model proposal*, *RELIEVE*, v. 16, n. 1 p.p 1-17
- 3) *Criteria for assessing PhD thesis*, University of Victoria, Faculty of Graduate Studies, Institute of Education, University of London.
- 4) Sid Bourke, *Keynote address PhD thesis quality: The views of examiners*, Australian Research Council Discovery Grant awarded to Allyson Holbrook, Sid Bourke, Terence Lovat

*THANK YOU*