

### ***Assessment criteria RMA theses***

35 ects: c. 30000+ words, figures, tables and reference list (40-60 pages); but excluding appendices. The length of the thesis is not a norm in itself. A high quality thesis can be short; a sizable thesis is not a guarantee for success.

*Learning outcomes: as an important test of research master learning objectives, the thesis should*

- demonstrate autonomous design of the research and pursuit of research questions;
- demonstrate profound knowledge and understanding of current issues and current research themes in the discipline;
- demonstrate understanding of the epistemological backgrounds of the theoretical models applied in the discipline;
- demonstrate profound knowledge and understanding of methods used in the discipline and in related disciplines;
- demonstrate ability to apply knowledge in complex situations in a way that extends the frontiers of existing knowledge;
- demonstrate the ability to handle complex data and information and to integrate these in coherent and meaningful knowledge about the past;
- the results should merit publication in international context;
- demonstrate reflection on methodical, historical, and ethical issues concerning the discipline and the place of their own research in a broader social, theoretical and multidisciplinary framework;

### ***Assessment:***

- *form and quality of the documentation, presentation and formulation;*
- *consistent presentation of the problem statement, research questions and research method, originality in research and research questions;*
- *treatment of the data; research methodology;*
- *analysis and conclusions.*

### **1. Form of the thesis: criteria**

The thesis will have to comply with the faculty standards (model thesis format, cf. document 'writing a thesis'). As an alternative, the style of an internationally, authoritative journal within the discipline may be followed, determined by the specialization. Technical quality of the figures and tables; correct captions and justification of the figures, general layout, execution of the documentary material;

#### **Assessment criteria:**

**A.** Basic quality (6): text is acceptable, aspects of form are all in accordance with the faculty standards; images are good quality scans or copies of originals with proper referencing.

**B:** Good quality (7): text is well structured, layout is given care, the images are good quality and some are produced by the author (line drawings).

**C:** Excellent (8): consistent, good text, very readable and logical structure, good construction and argumentation. Images are for a large part produced by the author.

Theses published as a book can get a 9 for form if the other criteria are met.

### **2. Organisation of the research: criteria**

An RMA thesis is never purely descriptive. It demonstrate state of the art and detailed knowledge of the field, of adjacent disciplines and of theoretical and methodological issues involved in the subject matter. The thesis demonstrates reflection and a critical attitude. Its conclusions are not only in line

with the research questions, but also indicate avenues for continued research that will enhance existing knowledge.

A thesis begins with a sketch of the research problems in a broader perspective, the objective, in other words **why** one wants to investigate something. Next from a number of possible research questions a selection is made that will be answered with aid of the data. These questions always are related to theoretical issues involving the research problems (in other words **what** will be researched and what questions need to be answered). Subsequently, the author explains which data will be used how the studied data will be approached in order to answer the research questions (research method, in other words **how** the questions are going to be answered).

**Assessment criteria:**

**A:** Basic quality (6). Objective and research questions have been formulated clearly. The subject has been chosen realistically and is well delimited. The methods to answer the research questions have been adequately chosen and are well founded. The student does explain the theoretical and/or methodical aspects of the subject under investigation.

**B:** Good (7). The problem orientation is original, the research questions and approach to the data unconventional. The potential for innovative research is present, but in the end may not have been fully exploited.

**C:** Excellent (8 or higher). The research theme is innovating in relation to current research questions in the discipline. The research proposal is original and has been carried out with a high degree of independence. There is considerable breadth and depth in theoretical and/or methodical reflection. The thesis is throughout well argued and of high quality in terms of academic reasoning.

**3. The research (data): criteria**

The data base are derived from field data (excavations) or from other sources. Generally original material will constitute the heart of research. The data will need to be described, but since data will be used to answer complex research questions, description is of secondary importance. The context is much more important. A research master thesis is always more than a field work report. The treatment of the data is according to the standards of the discipline and demonstrates profound knowledge of the data, of the period involved, and of its theoretical and methodical problems.

**Assessment criteria:**

**A:** Basic quality (6). The data are dealt with in such a way that the student demonstrates a good but not profound knowledge level. There is a good balance between the description of (find) material or data and the critical analysis thereof. The data is discussed in the framework of relevant and current literature.

**B:** Good quality (7). The data are dealt with in such a way that the student demonstrates profound level of knowledge, both of the data and of the theoretical and methodological issues involved. The data are treated in context.

**C:** Excellent (8 or higher). The student has independently searched for the data and examined them in a way that in all respects meets scientific criteria. Theoretical and methodological issues are discussed with a critical and reflective attitude. If the student has applied new or unconventional methods to explore the data that can be assessed with a 9.

**4. Conclusions / synthesis: criteria**

The conclusions are in line with the research problems and questions, but aim to be much more. An RMA thesis enhances existing knowledge rather than repeating it. The quality is high and in principle merits scientific publication in international fora.

**Assessment criteria:**

**A:** Basic quality (6). The conclusions are more than a summary of the presented data. An RMA thesis demonstrates that the student is aware of the theoretical, methodical and/or social aspects of the research carried out. A good degree of (self) reflection is important for good research (what is the power of expression of the conclusions, how are the data studied in relation to other phenomena in the problem area = feedback to the problem statement).

**B:** Good quality (7). The conclusions are good and research is really up to all standards. But it is still lacking that bit extra that makes it a really excellent thesis. The argumentation is good, but could be improved.

**C:** Excellent (8 or higher). The student has shown an excellent command of the subject matter, a very good own analysis thereof and a vision thereon related to the theoretical and/or methodical and/or social aspects of the discipline. There is an excellent reflection on the place of the own vision within the field of research. The study is an example of excellent interpretative ability and interdisciplinary visions. The results are a real contribution to knowledge and conceptualization in the discipline. In principle, an RMA thesis assessed as excellent should be publishable, in a summarized version, in an authoritative journal of the discipline.

General remarks: In the overall justification of the assessment the assessor has to specify why not has been chosen for the next qualification: 'This thesis merits a 7 because it is good quality, definitely more than basic quality in all respects. The potential for original research was there, but has not been fully exploited'.