



SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

**INFORMATION FOR EXAMINERS
MASTER OF MEDICINE DISSERTATION**

JANUARY 2026

Dear Colleague

Thank you for agreeing to examine this dissertation. The following paragraphs provide information to assist you in your marking. This document presents our thesis expectations to guide you in your marking.

1. SUITABLE PROJECTS

The Master of Medicine (MMed) project should emphasise the generation of a research question and the identification of appropriate aims, objectives and methodologies. Proficiency in this is critical to the successful practice of research. MMed projects do not have to produce novel findings. The emphasis is on the project's educational value rather than the findings. At the MMed level, the research need not be hypothesis-driven or experimental. Many projects are observational and descriptive. We suggest that students who choose a hypothesis-driven or experimental project deserve extra recognition.

- (a) Cross-sectional studies, retrospective and prospective observational studies, cohort studies, controlled trials and most laboratory-based studies are suitable.
- (b) Audits and systematic literature reviews should be structured to require the generation of a research question, problem statement, aims, objectives and methods rather than being purely descriptive. They should require a protocol and a structured methodology (e.g., a systematic literature review or scoping review, both of which are acceptable for the degree).
- (c) Case reports, informal literature reviews and audits not meeting these criteria are generally unsuitable for the research project.

2. STRUCTURE

We encourage submission of the thesis in publication format, which is described in more detail below. The traditional monograph format is also acceptable.

Preface

Both formats should contain a preface comprising title page, declaration, appreciation, dedication, authorship statement and acknowledgements (see below), Table of Contents and abstract.

Authorship statement

We require a complete statement on the contribution of the candidate to the work of the project. Where the manuscript format is chosen, the contribution of all coauthors must be stated. Candidates are instructed to use a modified version of the CRediT authorship statement required by many journals. Each author's name is followed by a list detailing their contribution to the project, qualified by the terms *lead*, *equal* or *support*.

3. THESIS IN MONOGRAPH FORMAT

This should be set out in the traditional style: preface, introduction and literature review, statement of the research problem, aims, hypothesis and objective, methodology, results, discussion and conclusions and bibliography followed by appendices.

4. THESIS IN PUBLICATION FORMAT

The following instructions are only applicable to the thesis **in publication format**.

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 provides an introduction to the project. It gives background and literature review. It should justify the research. The problem statement, research question, aims and objectives follow it. Though there may be some overlap between the introductory section of the manuscript describing the research (Chapter 2) and Chapter 1, the purpose is different. Chapter 1 allows the student to demonstrate familiarity with the literature and their ability to develop an appropriate research question and convert this into a study. Students are not required to discuss their methodology in this chapter, though they may introduce their approach in general terms. Chapter 1 should end with its own bibliography. This chapter is expected to be 3000 to 4000 words in length, excluding the bibliography.

Chapter 2

This describes the research and is presented as a publication-ready manuscript. Some candidates may already have their manuscripts published. Even so, they must present their work in the form of a manuscript. A PDF copy of the paper will be found in the appendices.

The manuscript is expected to be an independent, self-standing research report. It need not follow the Instructions for Authors of a specific, named journal, but should broadly conform to the standards required by most journals. Where the manuscript has already been accepted or published, then the manuscript should be presented as required by that journal. It must make sense independently of Chapter 1 and any material in the appendices. The length is subject-dependent. There is no minimum length and a flexible upper limit of 6000 words, independent of title pages, abstract, figures, tables and references. The examiners should decide whether the contents justify the extra length if this limit is exceeded.

EQUATOR recommendations

All manuscripts should be structured to comply with the recommendations of the EQUATOR network (<https://www.goodreports.org/>, <https://www.equator-network.org/>). Most MMed studies are observational and, therefore, covered by the Strobe checklist, which is appended to these guidelines. Students should be given some leeway, given that, in most cases, this is the student's first research experience, that the project's purpose is educational rather than results-oriented, and that the MMed is a coursework rather than a pure research master's degree.

Referencing

Where Chapter 2 contains a manuscript already accepted or published by a journal, its referencing style will be that of the journal. In this case, the referencing style chosen by the student for Chapter 1 is not required to be the same. The same referencing style must be used for both chapters where the manuscript is unpublished.

We advise our students to use the Vancouver style of referencing. We realise that there are some differences in how different journals interpret this. We expect that the student's referencing will not depart from what is permissible within the Vancouver system and will be consistent across the thesis. Other forms of referencing are acceptable, particularly for qualitative research, but must be applied consistently. Students are not required to specify a particular journal's style. If they choose to and add a statement to the thesis confirming this, they must be bound by that journal's Instructions to Authors.

We do not require a formal concluding chapter after the manuscript. The manuscript should cover discussion, conclusions, implications, strengths, limitations and future studies. We believe a concluding chapter is less appropriate for the single-manuscript MMed thesis than for the PhD, where the final chapter is used to unify the conclusions of multiple manuscripts.

Appendices

These include the research protocol and ethics correspondence. The student may include additional material, such as questionnaires, research instruments, data collection sheets and published papers.

5. POINTERS REGARDING FORMATTING

Spelling, grammar and style

Many of our students are not English-first-language speakers. Please expect some variation in fluency and style, but this does not excuse repetitive errors, poor formatting and textual ambiguity. Students are expected to have used aids such as spell and grammar checkers and independent proofreaders.

Numbering

The numbering of pages, tables, figures, and references should follow standard practice and be consistent.

Figures and tables

Figures and tables should contain relevant, comprehensible information, be linked to a reference in the text, and legends should be sufficiently informative to allow comprehension without reference to the text. The student may include figures and tables in the body of the thesis or present them collectively after the bibliography.

6. PLAGIARISM DECLARATION

All students are required to submit a Turnitin plagiarism report which should accompany the thesis.

7. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES

- (a) **Research competency:** Students should develop essential skills in research methodology, including formulating research questions, designing studies, collecting and analysing data, and interpreting results.
- (b) **A deeper understanding of the literature:** In writing up the background to their project, students learn to critically assess the literature, selecting and adapting it appropriately to their needs.
- (c) **Critical thinking and problem-solving:** Students should develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills by evaluating evidence, recognising and avoiding bias, and applying logical reasoning at clinical practice and research interface.
- (d) **Integration of research with clinical practice:** Students should learn how research findings are integrated into clinical practice.
- (e) **Academic growth:** The research process allows students to engage deeply with a topic of interest and gain further specialised knowledge. It prepares them for future academic pursuits, such as publishing or undertaking a PhD.

8. WRITING YOUR REPORT

Please do not write your comments directly on the thesis. Comments should appear on a separate sheet. This is so that the supervisor and school can efficiently cross-reference the examiners' comments (in the report), the student's reply (in the corrections table), and the highlighted corrected text (in the revised thesis), thus ensuring that all corrections have been made. We cannot do this if the comments are buried in the manuscript.

The following table lists aspects of the thesis that we believe are of particular importance in the comprehensive assessment of the thesis. We would be grateful if you would bear them in mind as you read the thesis and draw attention to weaknesses in them in your report. (We have incorporated these points into a comprehensive checklist for our examiners, but we have been asked not to implement it while its wider adoption in the University is considered.)

Domain	Areas of interest
Originality, presentation and writing quality	Is the thesis laid out appropriately organised and easy to follow? Is the writing clear, concise, and professional? Is the writing free of spelling and grammatical errors? Do you have any concerns about possible plagiarism or inappropriate use of AI?
Introduction, research question, aims and objectives	Is the Introduction appropriate? Does the literature reviewed justify the aims and objectives? Are the research question, aims and objectives appropriate and clearly set out?
Study design and methods	Do the study design and methods address the research question? Are the participants described adequately? Are the methods described adequately?
Results	Are the results clearly and logically presented? Do the results address the aims and objectives? Are tables and figures well-presented and appropriate? Are statistical methods appropriate? Has the student extracted all the value that the results can potentially provide?
Discussion	Does the discussion speak to the results? Is the discussion balanced and thoughtful? Are the limitations of the study adequately discussed? Are the implications of the study adequately discussed?
Overall impression	Has the student fully understood their own project? Does the student appear to understand the scientific method?

Minor versus major corrections

If you believe that a substantial quantity of additional material is required, or that sections need to be completely rewritten, please recommend *Substantial revision and re-examination* and not *Corrections to the satisfaction of the supervisor and school* in your report. Supervisors should not sign off large chunks of new or rewritten material not seen by an examiner, otherwise they are, in effect, contributing to the marking of their own students. Their role is to check that errors in spelling, grammar, formatting, referencing, and minor corrections to the text adequately reflect the examiners' recommendations.

Assigning a mark

Please assign a mark as a percentage to the thesis. The thesis will be awarded the average of both examiners' marks.

Pass with distinction

To graduate *cum laude*, students need (a) a recommendation by the examiners that the thesis is worthy of a distinction and a thesis mark of 75% or more, and (b) a coursework mark above 75% averaged over the MMed programme (comprising CMSA and internal examinations). Please tick the item *Do you recommend award of the degree with distinction?* on the examiner's questionnaire and assign a mark of 75% or higher if you believe it is deserved. We will take your opinion into account when identifying *cum laude* students.

9. CORRECTIONS

We require students to address all the examiners' comments in a corrections table. If the manuscript has already been accepted by a journal, they are not required to make changes to the thesis itself. Unpublished manuscripts must be updated according to the examiner's requirements.