

Master Thesis Opponent Guide

Find the strengths of the report, and call attention to these.

Approach to the Problem

Spend time on the problem description – is it clear, precise, and original? Is the problem of interest and relevance to the society and/or research community? Is the problem well founded upon previous research? If the problem description is unclear and vague, point this out to the author. Were the author's ambitions too high or too low?

Theory

Is the relevant theory referred to and employed in a convincing and credible way? Does the author develop his or her own perspective or pursue an existing perspective? Is the way the theory has been used on the problem well argued? If important parts of the project do not seem to be rooted in relevant theory, point this out to the author.

After reading the theory part it ought to be obvious what the author needs to look for in the empirical analysis. Feel free to contribute references, journal articles, books and URLs.

Empirical Analysis

Is the empirical setting correctly placed (after the introduction if the problem is empirically founded, after the theory if the problem is of a more general character)? Is there a good description of the setting to let the reader understand the context? Is the choice of design and methods well argued, to make it possible to do an empirical analysis of the problem? Point out to the author if too much information is taken for granted.

Is the data well presented? Are all tables, figures and quotations necessary? Are the data and the analysis/interpretation of the data well separated? Is the analysis/interpretation of the data reasonable and adequate? Is "raw" data presented in appendices when beneficial for checking the correctness of tables and figures?

Conclusion

Is the conclusion/ending well disposed? Has the author done what he or she proposed in the introduction? Does the report indicate future possibilities in research? If new elements are introduced, call attention to them.

Abstract

Is the abstract a good and concise summary of the major findings? If there is too much introductory text and too little about the findings, then tell the author.

General

The introduction and the conclusion should be appealing! This is where interest, curiosity and reflection can be attracted. Inspire the author to do this! Point out to the author where text could be simplified or omitted. The title must correspond to what is actually the topic of the report and should also attract the interest of the target audience.

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Be careful about commenting the report from your own preferences and perspectives. Place yourself in the author's perspective. How can you help the author make the report better – on his or her terms?

If you notice spelling mistakes or grammatical errors, faulty references or mistakes in the bibliography, make a note of these in the report and hand it to the author; do not spend time on such matters during the presentation.