

Beauty in The Eyes of Examiners: What Do Examiners Look For in A Thesis?



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Disclaimer



- Simply a sharing session from my limited experience as:

1. Theses examiner

- Accounting Research Institute (ARI), Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
- Faculty of Accountancy, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Malaysia
- Universiti Tenaga Nasional (UNITEN), Malaysia
- Edith Cowan University, Western Australia
- Murdoch University, Western Australia

2. Journals article reviewer (to list a few)

- Corporate Governance (Emerald Group Publishing, USA)
- Business Ethics: A European Review (John, Wiley & Sons Ltd)
- Asian Journal of Business and Accounting (Universiti Malaya, UM)
- Asian Academy of Management Journal (Universiti Sains Malaysia, USM)

My simple background



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[Auditing](#) [Behavioural Studies](#) [Corporate Governance](#) [Ethics](#) [Whistleblowing](#)

About

An academician with a history of working in public accountants' firms before joining Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Malaysia. A Chartered Accountant registered with the Malaysian Institute of Accountants (MIA). Awarded Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) qualification from Edith Cowan University, Western Australia in the field of Auditing and Corporate Governance. Research interests focusing in Auditing, Behavioral Studies, Corporate Governance and Ethics fields.

Menyerlahkan Potensi
Membentuk Masa Hadapan



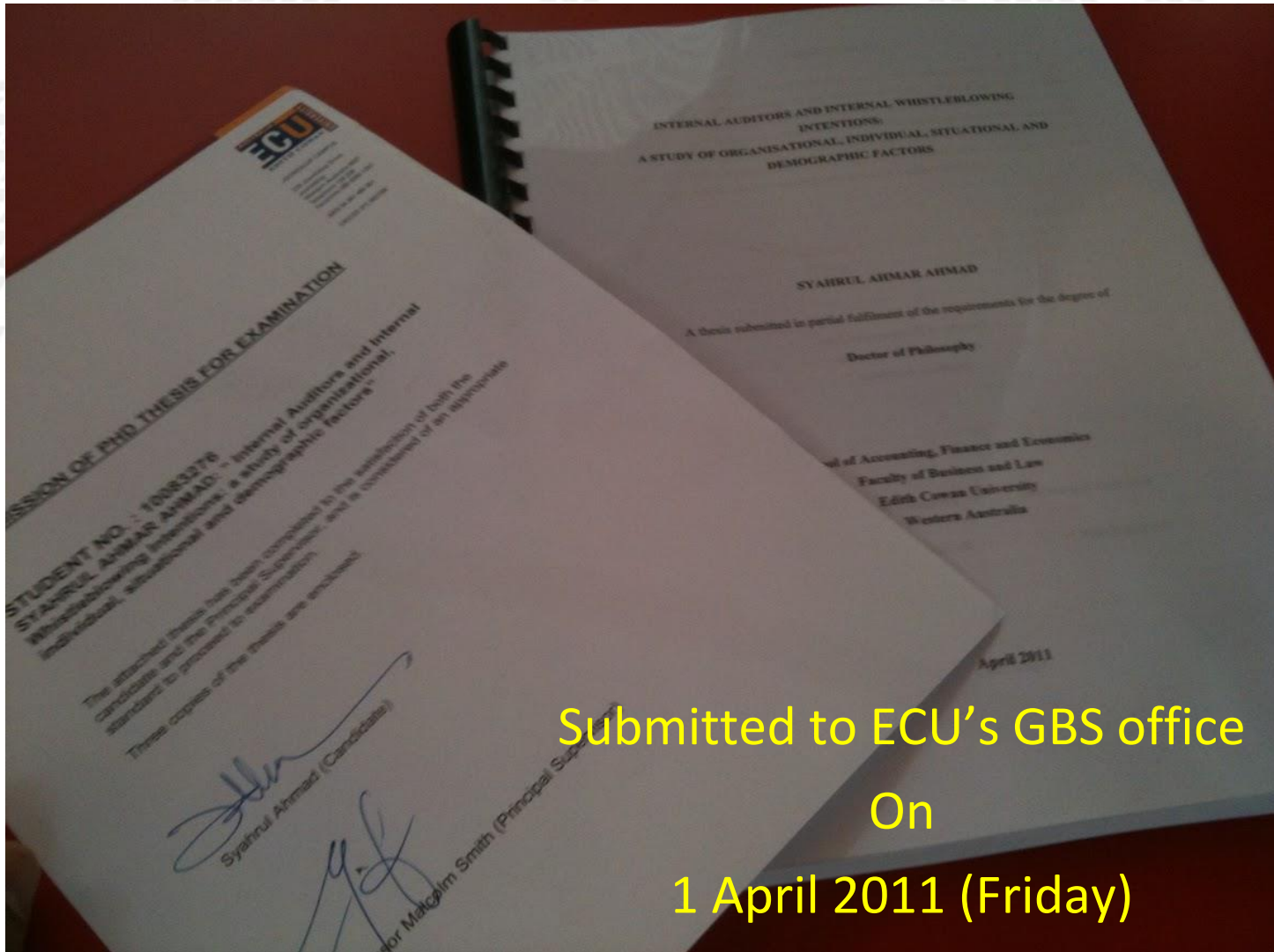
What will I share?

- What constitute beauty in the eyes of thesis examiners?
- How examiners read a thesis?
- What do examiners look for in a thesis?

NOTE:

1. With emphasis in the INTRODUCTION & CONCLUSION SECTION (Why???)
2. Sharing of real excerpts of my own examiner's notes – FYI purposes.

My PhD Thesis Submission



My thesis examiners:

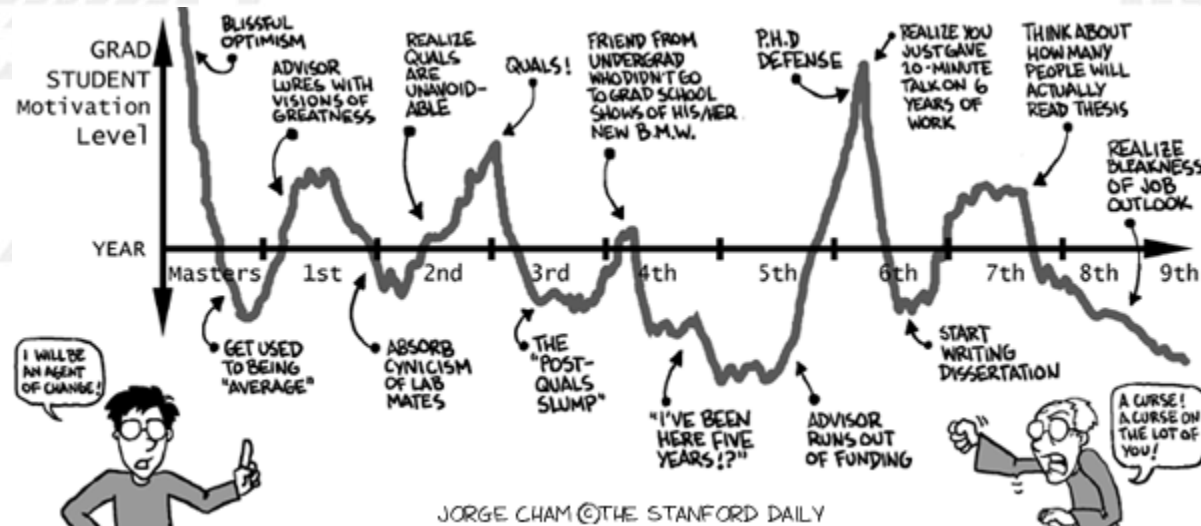
1. Prof Robert Clift - University of Tasmania, Australia
2. Emeritus Prof Michael Tayles - University of Hull, United Kingdom
3. Prof Janet Near - Indiana University, USA

My Research Supervisors:

1. Prof Malcolm Smith
2. Dr Zubaidah Zainal Abidin

Overview – Thesis Completion

- Candidates feeling while completing their thesis:



- What examiners felt when asked to examine a thesis?

<https://twitter.com/billatnapier/status/991645145836769280?s=20&t=h8-YYkkpoe8XrJCGv6EXTg>

My thesis is written in



Beauty in the eyes of thesis examiners?

- **What the notion of beauty really means?**
 - Perfection?
 - Subjective?
- **Beauty in the eyes of an examiner.. (What it really means..)**
 - thesis is written such that it accurately reflects the student's research achievements
 - Ideal flow of thoughts
 - Coherence structure of writing

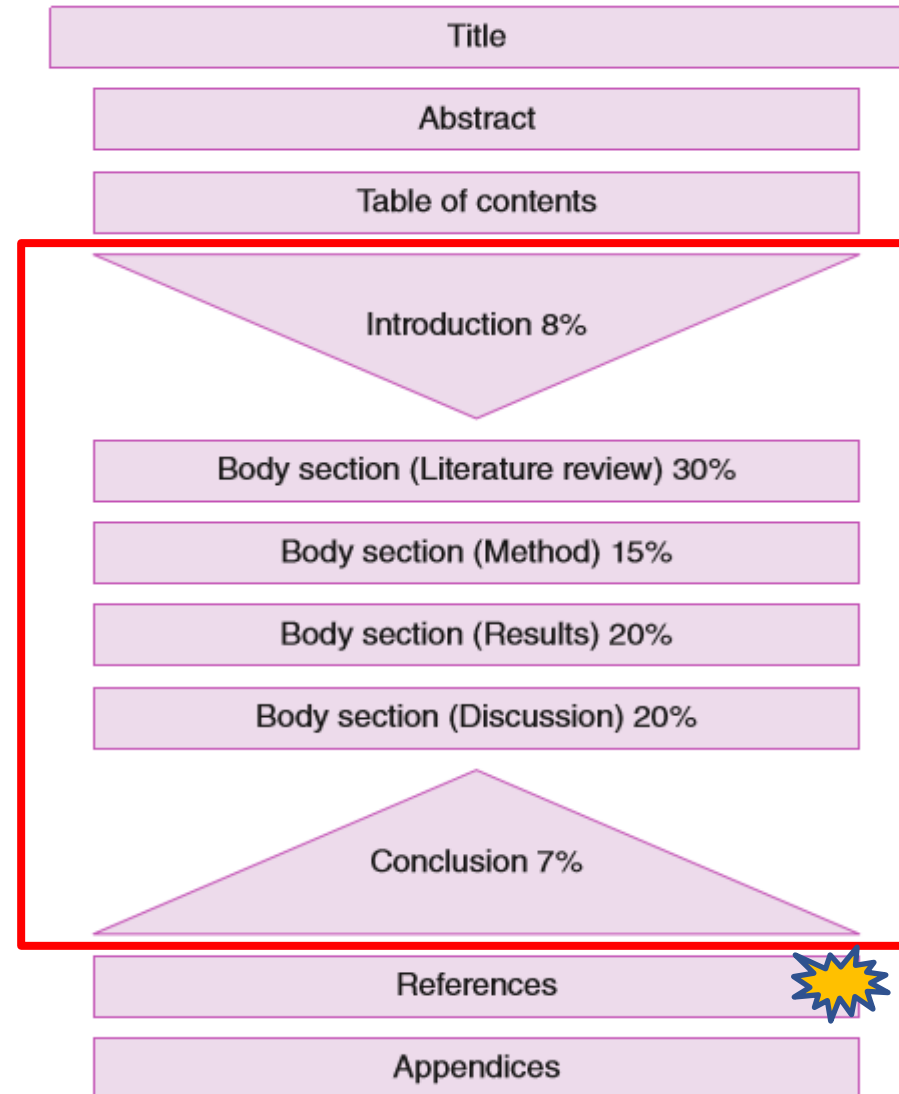
Thesis Components

My Thesis:

Internal Auditor and Internal Whistleblowing Intentions: A Study of Organisational, Individual, Situational and Demographic Factors

Source:

Hopkins, D. and Reid, T., 2018. The Academic Skills Handbook: Your Guide to Success in Writing, Thinking and Communicating at University. Sage.



Clear flows of thought to and fro
(vice versa)

How do examiners read a thesis?

- **Explicit criteria**
 - Based on the Uni's requirements (see Sample 1)
- **Implicit criteria**
 - Based on the individuality/examiner's criteria
 - Example:
 - Read the (1) **abstract**, (2) **introduction** and (3) **conclusions** to get a sense of the thesis (the most common approach!)
 - Look at the scope of the literature review
 - Read the thesis making detailed notes
 - Take a final read through with reference to the notes
 - Write a report



How do examiners read a thesis? – Cont'd



- **Introductions** and **Conclusions** can be the hardest parts of a thesis (Guerin, 2019)
- Candidates need to make sure the **Introduction** and **Conclusion** to their thesis **MATCH!**
- As Mullins and Kiley (2002, p.377) made clear:
“examiners do look to see whether the conclusions follow from the introduction. In effect, did the thesis achieve what it said it would do? Did it succeed in answering the research questions posed at the outset?”

How do examiners read a thesis? – Cont'd



First read area:

1. Abstract

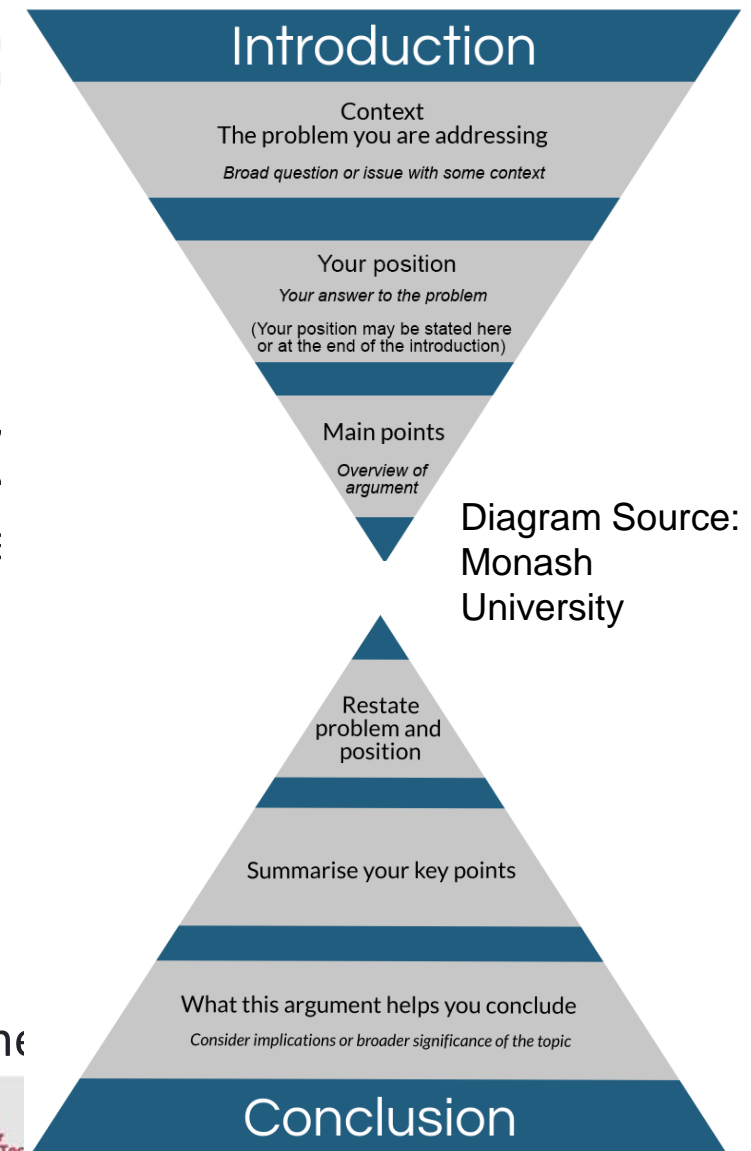
- a summary of the whole project, and will include aims and objectives, methods, results and conclusions.

2. Introduction – the most important section! (See sample 2)

- The aim is to set the scene, contextualise your research, introduce your focus topic and research questions, and tell the reader what you will be covering. It should move from the general and work towards the specific.

3. Conclusion

- This is a summary of your project, reminding the reader of the background to your study, your objectives, and showing how you met them. Do not include any new information that you have not discussed before.



What do examiners look for?

- Beautiful contents of thesis, represents:
 - Clearly articulated research question (**Introduction**)
 - Sound understanding of methodology (See sample 3)
 - Clearly presented results (See sample 3)
 - Well argued discussion and justified conclusions (**Conclusion**)
- Together with:
 - Clear use of English with correct use of Spelling and grammar
 - Use all available resources to achieve these!
 - Accurate references
 - Use Referencing tools from the BEGINNING!!!!
 - Employ proofreader

Examiners want the thesis to pass!

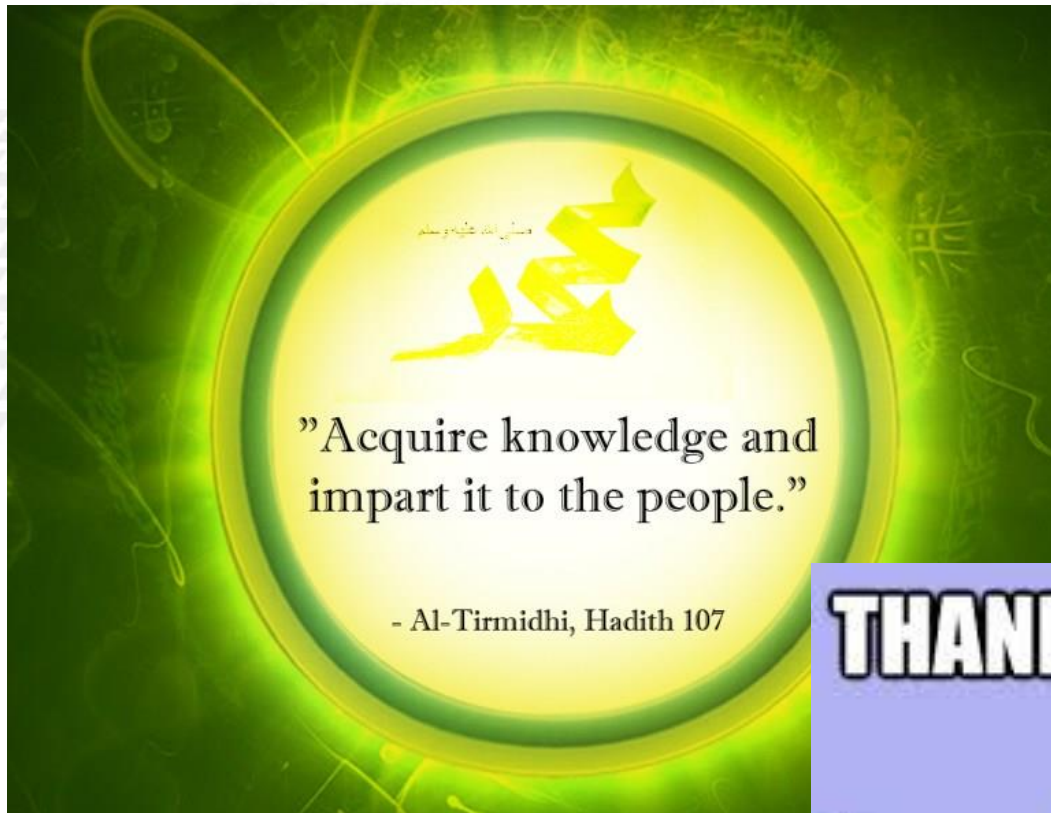


- Any sane examiners want the candidate to be awarded the PhD and will go to extraordinary lengths to enable this to happen.
- but **first impressions** are also very important (Golding et al., 2013)
- **Experienced examiners** should be sought for the examination process, not avoided, because of their high degree of tolerance & knowledge in the area of interest.
- Comments from these examiners actually reflect areas where candidate could pursue for publishing their research outputs.

Concluding remarks

- **Thesis examiners' perspectives:**
 - their first impressions count!
 - They read with academic expectations and the expectations of a normal reader.
- **Good thesis examiners:**
 - Provides instruction and advice to improve the thesis and
 - Suggestions for further publications and research.
- **A learning lessons to candidates:**
 - Be humble – it's a learning process!
 - Hardwork pays!! Inevitably through knowledge sharing.

Final thoughts..



<https://ro.ecu.edu.au/theses/152/>

