

Plano de Tese de Doutoramento PhD Thesis Plan Evaluation

Rules and Evaluation Criteria

1. Objectives of the Curricular Unit

The objective of the UC “Elaboração do Plano de Tese de Doutoramento” is the elaboration, oral presentation and public discussion of a Thesis Plan. The Thesis Plan is a document produced by the student, with the advice of the supervisor, that should address the aspects and follow the general structure described in the document “Guidelines for the preparation of the PhD Thesis Plan” (September 2009). The student load associated with the task is defined to be 30 ECTS units. Evaluation and approval of the Thesis Plan is required for the student to proceed to the research phase of the Doctoral Program.

2. Submission Process and Requirements

There are two possible submission dates each academic year, and two corresponding evaluation periods. A Thesis Plan submitted up to a given submission deadline must be evaluated before the closest evaluation deadline expires.

Summer Submission Deadline: 31 July

Evaluation Deadline: 30 November

Winter Submission Deadline: 14 February

Evaluation Deadline: 30 May

Important requirement: a student may only submit a Thesis Plan for evaluation after obtaining at least an average of 14 “valores” in a set of PhD courses conforming to the course requirements which were determined for her/him, at PhD program admission time.

3. Evaluation Process

The Thesis Plan evaluation is performed by an evaluation committee composed by the thesis advisory committee (“Comissão de Acompanhamento” - CAT), by the coordinator of the DINF. The evaluation committee is chaired by the DINF coordinator. The DINF coordinator may delegate in other member of the DINF CC, subject to approval by the DINF CC. Delegation is mandatory whenever the DINF coordinator is already a member of the thesis advisory committee (CAT).

To evaluation consists in a public session that should not exceed 1h30m in its whole duration. First, the candidate must offer a 20 minute presentation of the Thesis Plan. The rest of the available time is to be used for discussion, and must be evenly split among the evaluation committee members and the candidate, according to usual practices in thesis examinations. After the session concludes, the evaluation committee privately meets, and evaluates the written document and its presentation. After the evaluation is decided by the committee, an

appropriate evaluation form and scoring spreadsheet must be filled, and signed by all the members. The result is then communicated to the candidate by the evaluation committee chair.

To set up a Thesis Plan evaluation session, the supervisor must schedule the session date, taking into account the appropriate deadline, coordinating with the members of the advisory committee and with the DINF CC. To support this administrative process, the appropriate form should be filled and submitted at the DI office (attn: Filipa Mira Reis, fmr@di.fct.unl.pt).

4. Evaluation Criteria

According to legislation, the student must be graded by a quantitative score in the scale 0-20 in any course unit. Given the special nature of the course “Elaboração do Plano de Tese”, the eligible grades must fall in the ranges

18-19	Excellent
16-17	Very Good
14-15	Good
R	Fair
R	Fail

Qualitative levels are assigned to quantitative intervals as shown above, for calibration and information purposes. The final quantitative grade is to be determined by the following process:

- a) The evaluation committee agrees on a numerical score for each of the partial evaluation criteria A – F, listed below.
- b) The qualitative level corresponding to the final score computed from the partial evaluation criteria must be consistent with the global evaluation levels, as characterized below.

The partial evaluation criteria, and respective weights, are the following ones, graded with 3 (very good), 2 (good), 1 (fair) and 0 (unsatisfactory):

A. Quality of the state-of-the-art survey	20%
B. Innovation potential of the proposed ideas	20%
C. Relevance of the proposed research	20%
D. Methodology	20%
E. Planning of Activities	10%
F. Oral presentation and discussion	10%

The final score is given by the formula $SCORE = 0.6*(A+B+C+D)+0.3*(E+F)+8.5$

Evaluation of Criteria A. should only be graded 3 if the survey is explicitly used to critically motivate the research plan, rather than just describing related work. Evaluation of Criteria C. must take into account the scientific and technical potential of impact of the work to be carried out, including publication potential. Research choices in view of current trends are an essential component.

The global evaluation levels are described below. They should be regarded as reference descriptions, since some overlap between the several levels at the boundaries is to be expected.

Fail

A sub standard proposal, inferior to the Fair level, or a repetition of a Fair level, after resubmission.

Fair

The proposed Thesis Plan contributes with a good overview of the research topics and issues, but neither the document nor the discussion resulted in convincing evidence about the potential of novelty and / or technical depth of the proposed research, or the adequate preparation of the candidate to address the identified issues at the required level, as witnessed by low scores (1-0) in several of the partial evaluation criteria A-D, in particular B-C. Probably the candidate is not ready yet to proceed to the research phase of the PhD program, and should re-submit the Thesis Plan after a revision.

Good

The relevance, of the proposed ideas are sensibly justified, and the presentation and discussion provided convincing evidence that the candidate is well aware of the scope of the proposed research plan. The proposal of methodology and state of the art review also provides convincing evidence that the candidate may proceed with the proposed research, and that results with some technical depth and novelty may be eventually reached. However, the Thesis Plan and discussion revealed noticeable weaknesses in a few important aspects (as witnessed by at most one score of 1 but none of 0 in the partial evaluation criteria A-D).

Very Good

The novelty, relevance, and technical depth of the proposed ideas were solidly justified, and the presentation and discussion provided convincing evidence that the candidate is well prepared and understands the relevance and challenges of the proposed research plan. The discussion of methodology and state-of-the-art also shows that the candidate is able to situate the work plan in a broad context, and knows what tools and technical approaches should be applicable, if correctly followed, may certainly lead to good publications. All scores in the partial evaluation criteria A-D except perhaps two are ranked 3, and all partial evaluation criteria are in the range 3-2.

Excellent

A very good thesis plan. In addition, the presentation and discussion were extremely well performed, at an outstanding level. Work with a clear potential of impact, leading to good publications in top-level conferences and journals.

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Thesis Plan Evaluation Form

Quality of the state-of-the-art survey (weight:20%). Evaluates the completeness of the survey and of bibliography, the knowledge of the main research issues in the field, the ability to situate the proposed research in a broader context, the ability to relate it with the state-of-the-art, and the presence of a critical attitude, identifying limitations and opportunities. Grade 3 (Very Good) should only be assigned if all these aspects are well addressed.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good

Innovation potential of the proposed ideas (weight:20%). Evaluates the motivation for the problem or problems to be attacked, the identification of the kind of challenges to be overcome, and the justification of the novelty of the expected results. Grades 2-3 mean that the research problem is clearly formulated, and that there is convincing evidence that the plan already hints to novel techniques and approaches, that differ and go beyond existing approaches.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good

Relevance of the planned research (weight:20%). Evaluates the motivation of the research themes, and the justification of the scientific relevance, technical depth, and potential impact of the expected results. An important component of this item is the assessment of the research choices in terms of the current trends in the international research community, and of the publication potential of the results to be obtained.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good

Methodology (weight:20%). Evaluates the identification and presentation of the technical approaches and methods to be followed, how these relate to the established existing body of knowledge and current approaches in the scientific community, and the identification of appropriate publication venues.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good

Planning of activities (weight:10%) Evaluates the structure and feasibility of the proposed plan of activities.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good

Oral Presentation and Discussion (weight:10%). Evaluates the quality of the student presentation and arguing skills.

0-Unsufficient 1-Fair 2-Good 3-Very Good