Master's Thesis Guide of the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture

Introduction

This guide concerning master's theses of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture (ARTS) for the degrees of Master of Arts (Art and Design) and Master of Science (Architecture) and the related evaluation criteria (APPENDIX 1) have been approved in the Academic Committee for Arts, Design and Architecture on 22.10.2014 and they have been updated 18.22016, 29.1.2020 (Appendices 2 and 3 added), 21.6.2022 (Changes to the guide and to appendices 1 and 3) and 26.8.2026 (changes to appeals instructions).

Starting from 1.1.2023 this guide and evaluation criteria (APPENDICES 1 and 2) is applied to all master's theses in ARTS.

The departments may specify this guide and the appended evaluation criteria with implementation regulations providing students with more detailed information on the thesis practices of the programme and on the application of the school's general evaluation criteria to the theses of the department.

Aims of the master's thesis

To graduate, students must meet the aims set for the thesis. The aim of the master's thesis is that:

- Students demonstrate command of the field of the master's programme and ability to apply the knowledge and skills acquired in the programme independently;
- Students demonstrate ability for research-oriented work on an artistic, theoretical or applied research topic and demonstrate ability to use data and source material for research purposes;
- Students demonstrate good communication skills in the field of their study.

The thesis may be a piece of theoretical, artistic or applied research, a work of art or a combination of these; it may also include a production component. The production component may be, depending on the field, for instance, a design, a work of art, an exhibition, or project. Theses always include a written component.

The recommended extent of the written component of the thesis is 25–70 pages (min.50 000 and the recommended max. 140 000 characters) depending on the extent of the possible production component.

The evaluation criteria and the evaluation principles for theses have been described in more detail in Appendices 1 and 2 and in the chapter *When the thesis is complete.*

Starting the thesis work

Thesis Plan

The thesis process begins with choosing a topic and defining the scope or research questions of the thesis. The thesis is written on a topic related to the programme and/or major. Purpose of the thesis plan is to serve as a mental organizing tool helping both the student and the thesis advisor(s) in grasping the thesis process. Students write their thesis plan independently and/or in the thesis seminar of the programme. The thesis plan contains the following:

- topic and tentative title of thesis
- student name, programme and major
- thesis supervisor and thesis advisor(s)
- extent of thesis
- goals set for the research of the thesis
- description of the artistic component if the thesis is an artistic work
- definition of the thesis scope
- methodological choices, meaning a tentative plan on the ways of seeking solutions to the research questions or a description of the starting points and goals of artistic work

- language of thesis
- planned timetable for thesis completion
- financing plan if required by the topic of the thesis

After the plan is complete, the thesis topic needs to be approved; the topic of the thesis is approved by the thesis supervisor. Approving the topic also involves setting a period of validity for it; as a rule, the topic is valid for one year

Thesis supervisor and thesis advisor

The thesis supervisor and thesis advisor support the student in the thesis process. Roles and responsibilities of thesis supervisor and advisor are described in appendix 3.

The supervisor may be a professor in the programme, designated by the programme director, or by decision of the programme director, a lecturer or other member of faculty in the programme who is well-acquainted with the school and has sufficient academic credentials and thesis supervision skills. The supervisor is responsible for ensuring that the thesis topic is related to the programme and feasible to be covered within the scope of a master's thesis. Additionally, the supervisor ensures that the student finds a thesis advisor and is given sufficient supervision and guidance. The supervisor is responsible for approving the first two parts of the thesis, giving permission for submitting thesis for examination as well as examining the final thesis. If there are problems in the supervising process the student or the supervisor can contact the programme director or the head of the department.

Thesis advising is the responsibility of the thesis advisor, who supports the student in different stages of the thesis process. A thesis may have one or two thesis advisors, who may be either faculty members or 'external advisors'. At least one of the thesis advisors shall have excellent knowledge of the field of the thesis. The thesis supervisor and advisor may be the same person.

Obtaining approval for the thesis topic

When the thesis plan is ready, the student contacts the intended thesis supervisor in the programme or major in which the thesis is written to agree on the presentation of the topic. The availability of a suitable thesis supervisor is ensured in conjunction with discussing the personal study plan of the student (PSP).

The supervisor approves the topic and the thesis plan, appoints a thesis advisor or advisors and determines the period of validity of the topic (one year), i.e. the deadline for the thesis submission for examination. Thesis topic expires if the thesis is not submitted for evaluation by the deadline, in which case the student needs to get the topic re-approved by the supervisor to continue working on the thesis. Since thesis advisors commit to their task only for the period of validity of the topic, a new agreement on thesis advising is also necessary before continuing working on the thesis.

Doing the thesis as teamwork

Doing the thesis as teamwork requires agreeing on the arrangement with the thesis supervisor. If the thesis or its production component is done as teamwork, the student has to be able to demonstrate their contribution to the work in order to have it evaluated. The student is responsible for describing the process so that it can be evaluated.

Doing the thesis on commission

The thesis may also be done on commission for a company or other organization. It must however be borne in mind, that the thesis is primarily a piece of academic work and evaluated against academic criteria. The thesis topic of a thesis done on commission is approved in accordance with the normal procedure described in this guide. The topic, timetable, supervision and advising responsibilities of the commissioner as well as any compensation for the related work is recommended to be agreed upon in writing. For contracts, see the Aalto university contract templates.

Publicity of the thesis and processing confidential information

Approved theses are public documents. Theses cannot contain any confidential information; for instance, if confidential information is processed during the process of doing a commissioned thesis, any confidential information has to be excluded from the thesis to be evaluated. This means that any confidential material must either be treated as background material for the thesis or worked on separately from the thesis to be

evaluated. If there is a need to discuss confidential information in the thesis, the student and thesis supervisor must agree on its use in advance.

Language of the thesis

Students may write their master's thesis either in Finnish, Swedish or English. Students studying in a Finnish-language programme and wishing to write their thesis in English need to agree on this with the thesis supervisor when obtaining approval for the thesis topic. When choosing the language of the thesis, students should bear in mind that, one requirement for the thesis is demonstrating the language skills needed for the work in their field of study. In other words, students need to have good command of the language of the thesis. The student is responsible for ensuring the correctness of the language; the language may affect the evaluation.

Students in an English-language programme are entitled to write their thesis in Finnish or Swedish. Pursuant to Aalto University guidelines on the languages of degree and instruction (AAK 6.4/2/2015) the language of the degree will be marked as Finnish if a student in an English-language programme writes their thesis in Finnish.

The language of the thesis abstract and maturity essay are defined in the section *Abstract (maturity essay).*

Doing the thesis

Parts of thesis work

The thesis is completed in three parts that award 10 credits each. Supervisor is responsible for assessing and approving the first two parts after the student has completed them. First two parts of the thesis are assessed in the scale of pass – fail. The third part is the final submission of the completed thesis and in that part the completed work will be evaluated as a whole. Instructions for evaluation of the third part is given in chapter *When the thesis is completed.* Assessment criteria for the first two parts is described in appendix 2. Emphasis may be put on criteria most relevant for that particular thesis taking into account the phase of the unfinished thesis work.

For the approval of the first two parts of the thesis the student submits the required sections of their thesis to be assessed. The student shall be given feedback at least once during each of the thesis parts. The student is allowed to make changes to the first two approved parts of the thesis, since in the final evaluation the whole work will be evaluated as a whole. If the student makes significant changes after approval it is their responsibility to ensure that the changed part still meet the required criteria to be approved as a master's thesis. Changes are not possible after the final work has been submitted for evaluation.

Thesis advising

Although the thesis is to be done independently, students have the responsibility to consult the thesis advisor during the writing process to ensure that requirements are met. Students appointed an external thesis advisor or advisors may, as a rule, be given a total of max. 10 contact hours of guidance by the external advisor(s), and a reasonable amount of guidance by the thesis supervisor or the departmental thesis advisor.

The student and the thesis advisor should agree in detail on the advising arrangements and timetables. Both parties are responsible for compliance with the thesis plan; should any problems arise in advising, the thesis advisor or student should contact the supervisor to resolve the issue as soon as possible. Since the supervision and advising process cannot be taken into consideration in the evaluation of the thesis, any problems in it should be brought up before the examination of the thesis.

Responsible conduct of research and good artistic practices

As part of the supervision process, students are instructed in responsible conduct of research. For additional information on the code of academic integrity of the university, see *Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling Violations Thereof.* The guideline describes responsible conduct of research and good artistic practices and explains different types of misconduct. Aalto University is committed to acting in compliance with the guideline '*Responsible conduct of research and procedures for handling allegations of misconduct in Finland*' by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. Any works of others' used either as reference material or data in the thesis is protected by copyright and is to be considered in the thesis work. More information on the copyright issues can be found in *Art Universities Copyright Advice Copyright*

Guide.

Ensuring the correct citing and referencing techniques is part of thesis advising. To this end, the student should enter the thesis text into a university-provided plagiarism detection system for an electronic originality check well in advance of the thesis submission. After the check, which the student and the thesis advisor representing the school faculty go through the report produced by the system and review any problems in citing and referencing that the student may have. Students with only external thesis advisors go through the originality report with the thesis supervisor.

Support for academic writing and specialist support

Students who need support in academic writing can seek help in the courses and writing clinics offered by the Aalto University Language Centre. The school publishes the details on the Language Centre teaching for ARTS students annually.

Students who feel they need specialist support for writing the thesis may contact the individual study arrangements contact person in the School of Arts, Design and Architecture to find out about possible support measures.

Layout of the thesis

The title page of the thesis must include: the student name, thesis title, type of thesis (master's thesis for Master of Science (Architecture) or for Master of Arts (Art and Design)), extent of thesis, name of programme and possible major, school, university, and year of thesis publication.

Abstract (maturity essay)

The thesis includes an abstract describing the contents of the work. The purpose of the abstract is to summarise the key contents of the thesis in a manner that allows a non-specialist reader to understand the main points. The abstract is written in the present tense and includes the key contents of the thesis.

The abstract also includes the details of the thesis such as school, department, programme and major for which the thesis has been written, thesis supervisor and thesis advisor(s). The abstract has no subheadings. The abstract is written in standard language without abbreviations, but special terminology of the field of study is allowed. The abstract may be written on a template; if the template is not used, the abstract may be max. one A4 page long and it has to contain the same information as provided on the template. The abstract is appended to the thesis.
The abstract is written in two languages: in the language in which the student has been educated (Finnish or Swedish) and in English. Both language versions are appended to the thesis. Students who write their theses in English and have been educated in another language than Finnish or Swedish, write the abstract only in English.

The abstract serves also as the maturity essay for the master's degree. Writing the abstract (the maturity essay) in the language in which one has been educated (Finnish or Swedish) is part of demonstrating the requisite language proficiency for the degree. For students educated in Finnish or Swedish, the version written in the language the student has been educated serves as the maturity essay and both its contents and language are checked. The abstracts of students educated in a language other than Finnish or Swedish are only submitted for a content check. Students who have already demonstrated requisite proficiency in the language in which they have been educated (Finnish or Swedish) and written a maturity essay in that language for the bachelor's degree do not have to demonstrate their language proficiency again for the master's degree. In such cases, only the contents of the maturity essay are checked.

The contents of the maturity essay are checked by the supervisor of the thesis or, in the supervisor's absence or indisposition, the director of the master's programme or a teacher of the department assigned by the director. The language of the abstract is checked by the Language Centre. The abstract (maturity essay) is evaluated on a scale of Pass/Fail. If the thesis is failed, the abstract is also failed.

When the thesis is complete

Submitting the master's thesis for examination

When the thesis complete, the student presents it first to the thesis advisor and, after their approval, to the

supervisor. First two parts of the thesis must be approved before the final work can be submitted for examination. Thesis includes an oral presentation on the completed thesis before it can be submitted for examination. The completed thesis is primarily presented in public presentation events, for example department or programme presentation session or in a seminar, but it can be presented also in some other event or meeting agreed with the supervisor. If a student needs to present somewhere else than in the public presentation sessions, they need to contact their supervisor at latest two months before the planned submission deadline to schedule the oral presentation.

Once the thesis supervisor has familiarized themselves with the thesis to a sufficient extent to know that it meets the requirements set for theses and confirmed, that the student has presented the thesis they permit its submission for examination. In case the supervisor denies the permit to submit the thesis, the student needs to make the changes pointed out by the supervisor before submitting the work for examination. If the student wants to submit their work for examination without supervisor's permission the supervisor informs the programme committee on what grounds the permit was denied. The programme committee will decide on the basis of the supervisor's statement whether or not the committee will allow the student to submit their thesis to be examined.

Students must submit for examination all those components of the thesis that they wish to have examined. The written component is submitted for examination only in electronic format. The electronic documentation of artistic or productive part is submitted together with the written part.

Departments offer thesis submission possibilities in certain Aalto University graduation dates defined by the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. There must always be the possibility to submit theses for examination on the last graduation dates of each semester. Departments publish thesis submission dates and public presentation sessions in the beginning of each academic year.

Thesis publicity and electronic archives

The electronic copy of the thesis is retained permanently at Aalto University's publication archive. Evaluation statements are retained in Aalto University Archives permanently. Together with the written component, also the documentation or recording of the production in electronic form is saved in a manner suitable for the nature of the production and its copyrights.

The thesis is a public document and is available in accordance with Aalto University publishing policies.

In addition to the publication archive, the theses may be saved in an electronic comparison repository. Saving the thesis to the comparison repository protects it against plagiarism, since the text of the thesis may be compared to work submitted by other students.

Examination of the thesis

Programme director appoints thesis examiners. Supervisor acts as one examiner and proposes the other examiner to be appointed by the programme director, The other examiner can be Aalto faculty or external. Supervisor is in charge of the evaluation of the thesis and puts forth the examination statement and grade proposal to the programme committee. Supervisor ensures that theses are evaluated according to evaluation criteria appended in this guide. The examiners must hold at least the same level of degree as the thesis being evaluated or be in a professorial position. In case the supervisor is unable to examine the thesis, an Aalto University faculty member who is familiar with the process of the examined thesis (e.g. thesis advisor) can be appointed to substitute them, Supervisor is anyway responsible for the examination process and putting forth the examination statement and grade proposal.

All the components of the thesis are included in the evaluation. The written component of the thesis is examined on the basis of the submitted PDF document. If the thesis contains a unique event that cannot be reproduced as such (e.g. exhibition, discussion, pedagogical experiment, performance), the student must request the examiners to be appointed well in advance of the event. The examiners of the work must acquaint themselves with the production component and the related documentation.
If this is not possible, the examiners acquaint themselves with the production only on the basis of documentation. Producing adequate documentation for the evaluation of the thesis is the responsibility of the student.

If the thesis consists of a design or other production component and a written component, the student must specify the emphasis to be given to the different components in the evaluation. However, the thesis is always evaluated as a whole, with all the components of the thesis included in the evaluation. The examiners evaluate

the thesis in accordance with the criteria specified in the appendix (APPENDIX 1). Examiners write the examination statement and present a grade proposal to the programme committee. The statement is written in the same language as the thesis or the translation of the thesis for examination. Supervisor delivers the statement and the grade proposal to the committee. The final grade is given for the thesis as a whole using those evaluation criteria which are relevant for the thesis. Emphasis may be put on criteria most relevant for that particular thesis: if the student defines their work as theoretical or applied research, the criterion *Quality of the artistic component* may be ignored. In such cases, weight is put on the criterion *Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation*

Interrupting the evaluation process

In the Aalto University General Regulations on Teaching and Studying (29§, 2021) it is ruled that the student must be given a chance to be heard before the evaluation of a thesis in cases where the written statement explaining the grade proposes the thesis be assigned the grade of 'fail'. In such cases, students may ask for the interruption of the evaluation of their thesis. Interruption of evaluation will terminate the evaluation process. The request is processed by the programme committee, that also decides on the follow-up measures.

Evaluation of the thesis.

Programme committee approves and grades the thesis based on examination statement and grade proposal. Only those members of the programme committee who have completed a study attainment of corresponding level or who have been appointed professors may take part in the committee decision making on thesis approval and grades.

A thesis may be failed if it does not meet the requirements set for theses or if the student has violated against the university code of academic integrity while working on it (e.g. through plagiarism). If the thesis is failed, the process starts over with the student obtaining approval for the topic from the thesis supervisor. If failing the thesis was not due to reasons related to the topic, the same topic may be re-approved. If the thesis was failed due to plagiarism or other violation of the code of academic integrity, the violation is handled in accordance with the *Aalto University Code of Academic Integrity and Handling of Violations Thereof*. Previously approved parts of the thesis are still valid even if the thesis is failed or the student interrupts the evaluation process.

The student has the right to receive a written notification of the grade after the programme committee meeting, including the written statement of the examiners and any reasoning given for the grade. Students dissatisfied with their thesis grade should first discuss the evaluation with the thesis supervisor..

Appeals

Students dissatisfied with the grade of their thesis may appeal against the decision in writing to the Aalto University Academic Appeals Board within 14 days of receiving notification of the decision. When calculating the appeal period, the day of notice shall not be included. An electronically submitted appeal shall be received no later than on the last day of the 14-day appeal period. An appeal submitted in paper form shall be received before the university registry's closing time (15.00 Finnish time) on the last day of the 14-day appeal period.

If the student is notified of the decision by an electronic message (by e-mail), the notification is deemed to have been received by the student on the third (3) day after mailing, unless proven otherwise.

If the student is notified of the decision by mail, the notification is deemed to have been received by the student on the seventh (7) day after mailing unless proven otherwise.

The appeal shall be submitted either to the Registry's email address kirjaamo@aalto.fi or by post to its postal address: Aalto University Academic Appeals Board, Registry, P.O. Box 11000, FI-00076 AALTO.

The appeal must specify the following:

1. Student name and email address or other contact address for sending information regarding the appeal (service address) and a telephone number, if any

2. Date of student receiving notification of the decision

3. Decision (incl. name of thesis and person responsible for grading)

4. Change sought with the appeal

5. Grounds for the appeal (copies of documents on which the student bases their appeal if not already submitted to Aalto University).

No appeal may be lodged against the decision of the Academic Appeals Board.

For additional information, contact the secretary of the Academic Appeals Board.

General instructions on graduation

The thesis is usually one of the final study attainments of the degree and related to the completion of the degree. Well in advance the student should check their completed studies from their personal study plan (PSP) and transcript of records, and make sure that the PSP is updated, approved by the academic advisor and meets the degree requirements. The student applies for graduation in student information system Sisu. Students can apply for graduation after PSP is approved, all the required studies are completed and registered, and thesis has been submitted for examination. In conjunction with graduation application, students are asked to fill out an online graduate survey.

Appendix 1 Thesis evaluation criteria

The evaluation criteria below apply to the master's theses of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. The final grade is given for the thesis as a whole using those evaluation criteria which are relevant for the thesis. Emphasis may be put on those criteria that are relevant for that particular thesis: if the student defines his or her work as theoretical or applied research, the criterion *Quality of the artistic component* may be ignored. In such cases, weight is put on the criterion *Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation*

Items related to thesis process may affect thesis grade e.g following the schedule and independent working. The scope of the master's thesis shall be 30 credits, equivalent of six months of fulltime studies. If the student exceeds the target time agreed with the supervisor extensively, it may lower the grade. Delays not dependent on the student are taken into consideration as extenuating circumstance.

The thesis is evaluated on a grading scale of 0(fail)/1(passable)/2(satisfactory)/3(good)/4(very good)/5(excellent) where 5 is the highest grade (Aalto University Degree Regulations 2021, 10§).
In the grades 3–5 of the chart, the previous standard of quality is included in the next.

Evaluation criteria and matters evaluated	**Grounds for failing the thesis**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Choice of topic and of the artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis Relevance of the topic for the field Definition of topic Setting of artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis	The thesis topic has not been approved and it is not related to the programme or major of the student. The lack of any definition of scope significantly complicates the discussion of the topic. The goals of the thesis are not explicated.	The topic of the thesis has been approved but it is poorly linked with the field. A lacking definition of the scope complicates the discussion of the topic. The scientific and artistic goals of the thesis are vaguely presented.	The topic is related to the field but has little relevance for it. Unclear definition of the scope complicates fluent discussion of the topic. Some scientific and/or artistic goals are apparent, but the arguments for them are weak.	The topic has significance for the field. The definition of the scope is clear and supports the discussion of the topic. The student has set scientific and/or artistic goals for the thesis and justifies them.	The definition of the scope is justified and supports the discussion of the topic very well. The student analyses the choice of the scientific and/or artistic goals of the thesis.	The topic is demanding. The definition of the scope demonstrates in-depth under-standing of the topic. The student evaluates the choice of the scientific and/or artistic goals of the thesis.
Command of topic and use of sources Command of the topic Use of sources	The student is not familiar enough with the topic to discuss it in the thesis. The key sources relevant for the topic have been ignored. The text repeats the contents of the sources without providing references (plagiarism).	The scope of the topic has been recognised but knowledge of subject area is superficial. The sources are not relevant or evaluated. There are shortcomings in citing and referencing techniques.	The topic has been described. The thesis makes use of sources that allow the discussion of the topic but source evaluation is lacking. The student has fair command of citing and referencing techniques.	The thesis demonstrates the student's command of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. The sources used in the thesis are essential for the topic and the use of sources demonstrate good command of the subject area. Sources have been evaluated. Good command of citing and referencing techniques.	The thesis demonstrates the student's very good command of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. The thesis demonstrates very good command of key sources. The sources are evaluated and weighted purposefully.	The thesis demonstrates the student's in-depth knowledge of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. Finnish and international sources are used extensively. The sources are critically evaluated and their choice and weighting supports the discussion of the topic excellently.

Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation Choice of methods and techniques for analytical and research-oriented work Ability to draw conclusions and think independently. Conceptualisation of the topic and linking it to a broader context. Evaluation of thesis reliability	The goals set for the thesis are not achieved with the methods or techniques selected. The discussion of the topic lacks any analysis and no conclusions are drawn in the thesis.	There are shortcomings in the command of the method or technique selected that affect the results. The conclusions are exaggerated or lacking. There are major shortcomings in arguing for the conclusions and evaluating the reliability of the thesis.	The choice and command of methods and techniques support the attainment of the goals in a satisfactory manner. Conclusions have been drawn but the arguments for them are weak. The thesis discusses factors affecting its reliability.	The choice of methods or techniques supports the discussion of the topic. The student has good command of the methods techniques selected. The student demonstrates ability for analytical and research-oriented work. The student draws justified conclusions or, in an artistic work, demonstrates independent thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The student understands the broader context of the thesis. The student analyses the reliability of the key aspects of the thesis.	The student has excellent command of the methods or techniques and applies them very well. The student demonstrates very good skills in analytical and research-oriented work and critical thinking. The student draws justified conclusions based on analysis, or in an artistic work, independent thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The conclusions are analysed in light of the source literature. The student conceptualises the results and discusses their relation to a broader context. The student evaluates the reliability of the thesis critically	The student applies and critically evaluates the selected methods or techniques. The student examines the topic analytically and critically and understands the complexity of the phenomenon. The student draws significant conclusions which inspire future research, design or artistic activity, or, in an artistic work, evaluates their thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The student conceptualises the results and discusses their relation to a broader context. The student evaluates the reliability of the thesis critically and comprehensively.
Quality of the artistic component Idea and execution of the production component Artistic thinking or design vision Understanding the broader context of the work Documentation of the production	The execution of the production component has major shortcomings and does not support the discussion of the topic. The production component has not been documented.	The execution of the production component has shortcomings and articulates the idea or topic poorly. The documentation of the production has significant defects.	The execution of the production component supports the idea of the work to some extent. There may be shortcomings in the execution. The production has been documented, there may be small shortcomings in the documentation.	The execution of the production component supports the idea of the work. The student demonstrates ability for artistic thinking or design vision. The production has been sufficiently documented. The production can be assessed based on the documentation.	The production component execution is of very high quality. The related solutions are interesting and support the idea of the thesis very well. The student demonstrates ability for lateral artistic thinking or design vision. The work is evidently linked to the conventions of the field and to a broader context.	The production component execution is excellent and supports the idea of the thesis insightfully. The student demonstrates excellent ability for lateral artistic thinking or design vision. The student demonstrates in depth command of the conventions of the field and/or challenges them successfully.
Description and analysis of the process Description and analysis of the working process	No description is provided of the working process or the choices made	The student describes the working process or the choices made to a minor extent.	The student describes the working process or the choices made but the arguments for them are weak.	The student describes the working process and/or the choices made and justifies them analytically.	The student analyses and evaluates the working process and/or the choices made.	The student evaluates the working process and/or the choices made in depth.

Quality of thesis language and presentation Quality of thesis language	The presentation of the various thesis components complicates understanding its contents. There are major shortcomings in the written expression.	The presentation of the thesis components is not appropriate for the contents. Notable shortcomings in written expression.	The presentation of the thesis components involves solutions that do not support the discussion of the topic. Written expression is satisfactory, but the language needs revision	The presentation of the thesis components support the discussion of the topic. Written expression is fluent and the thesis has no errors that affect readability.	The solutions applied into presentation of the thesis components are very good and support the discussion of the topic very well. The written expression is fluent and almost free of errors, and the style is appropriate.	The solutions applied to the presentation of the thesis components are commendable and support the discussion of the topic excellently. The written expression supports the discussion of the topic and the understanding of the contents excellently. The text has no errors.
Knowledge and professional skills	The student does not demonstrate knowledge or skills required in the degree. The student does not demonstrate sufficient ability to plan or conduct their work independently.	The student demonstrates the minimum level of knowledge and skills and an ability to apply their knowledge to work in the field. The student demonstrates a minimum level of ability to plan and conduct their work independently.	The student demonstrates command of the key skills of the field and a satisfactory ability to apply knowledge to work in the field. The student demonstrates satisfactory ability to plan and conduct their work independently meeting the basic criteria of the field.	The student demonstrates artistic or scientific knowledge and skills or other expertise relevant to the field and an ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing questions of the field. The student demonstrates ability to plan and conduct their work independently meeting the criteria of the field.	The student demonstrates artistic vision, professionalism, analytical or scientific skills and a very good ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing questions of the field. The student demonstrates very good ability to plan and conduct their work independently in the field of studies.	The student demonstrates significant artistic vision, professionalism, critical research-oriented thinking and an excellent ability to apply the gained knowledge to discussing issues of the field. The student demonstrates excellent ability to plan and conduct their work independently in the field of studies.
Overall impression Overall description of thesis Connection between the thesis components	The thesis has a great deal of major shortcomings. The thesis components are not interconnected and the student does not justify the choices made.	The thesis has major shortcomings but meets the minimum criteria for a thesis. The thesis components do not form an integrated whole and the choices regarding the thesis components are not justified.	Despite shortcomings, the work fulfils all the criteria set for a thesis. The thesis components do not form an integrated and coherent whole, and the choices regarding the thesis components are poorly justified.	The thesis fulfils the criteria set for a thesis well. The thesis components form an integrated whole or the student justifies the choices regarding the components well.	The thesis fulfils all the criteria set for a thesis and has particular merits in some areas. The thesis components form an integrated coherent whole. The student analyses their solutions regarding the thesis components.	The thesis has particular merits as a whole and in almost all areas. The thesis components form an integrated whole and support each other excellently. The student justifies and evaluates their solutions regarding the thesis components.

Appendix 2

Master's thesis evaluation criteria for three parts of the thesis

The evaluation criteria below apply to the master's theses of the School of Arts, Design and Architecture. The final grade is given for the thesis as a whole using those evaluation criteria that are relevant for the thesis. Emphasis may be put on those criteria that are relevant for that particular thesis. The departments may specify the requirement for the completion of the first two parts of thesis in their own descriptions.

Part	Sections in the thesis	Assessed themes	Grounds for failing the thesis	Grounds for approval
10 cr Thesis plan and conceptual framework	**Thesis plan**	**Choice of topic and of the artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis** Relevance of the topic for the field Definition of topic Setting of artistic and/or scientific goals for thesis	The thesis topic has not been approved and it is not related to the programme or major of the student. The lack of any definition of scope significantly complicates the discussion of the topic. The goals of the thesis are not explicated.	The topic has significance for the field. The definition of the scope is clear and supports the discussion of the topic. The student has set scientific and/or artistic goals for the thesis and justifies them.
	Conceptual framework (alternatively the production if it is decided in the programme)	**Command of topic and use of sources** Command of the topic Use of sources	The student is not familiar enough with the topic to discuss it in the thesis. The key sources relevant for the topic have been ignored. The text repeats the contents of the sources without providing references (plagiarism).	The thesis demonstrates the student's command of the topic and its context or theoretical framework as well as of the previous research. The sources used in the thesis are essential for the topic and the use of sources demonstrate good command of the subject area. Sources have been evaluated. Good command of citing and referencing techniques.
10 cr Methods and preliminary results, production	**Methods and results**	**Discussion of the topic, conclusions, and interpretation** Choice of methods and techniques Ability for analytical and research-oriented work Ability to draw conclusions and think independently Conceptualisation of the topic and linking it to a broader context. Evaluation of thesis reliability	The goals set for the thesis are not achieved with the methods or techniques selected. The discussion of the topic lacks any analysis and no conclusions are drawn in the thesis.	The choice of methods or techniques supports the discussion of the topic. The student has good command of the methods or techniques selected. The student demonstrates ability for analytical and research-oriented work. The student draws justified conclusions or, in an artistic work, demonstrates independent thinking in relation to the topic discussed. The student understands the broader context of the thesis. The student analyses the reliability of the key aspects of the thesis.
	Production (alternatively the conceptual framework if it is decided in the programme)	**Quality of the artistic component** Idea and execution of the production component Artistic thinking or design vision Understanding the broader context of the work Documentation of the production	Execution of the production component has major shortcomings and does not support the discussion of the topic. The production component has not been documented	The execution of the production component supports the idea of the work. The student demonstrates ability for artistic thinking or design vision. The production has been sufficiently documented. The production can be assessed based on the documentation.
The final work.	**All parts of thesis**	**Evaluation according to thesis evaluation criteria and evaluation procedure**		

APPENDIX 3 Supervisor's and advisor's roles in thesis process

	Supervisor	**Advisor**
Must be	- approved by the programme director - faculty of the programme - well acquainted with the school policies	- expert in the field of study
Approves / decides	- thesis topic - thesis topic validity - workplan - advisor(s) - parts 1/3 and 2/3 to be registered - permission to submit the thesis - extension and re-approval of the topic	
Agrees / ensures	- language of the thesis - with the examiner on the examination, informs the examiner on the phase of the work and puts forth proposal for the second examiner to the programme director - the adequacy of guidance from the advisor(s) - the procedure in case of appeal - originality of the text based on the report (if the student has only external advisors) - on the arrangements when thesis is done as teamwork - instructions on using confidential information	- originality of the text based on the originality report (has to be Aalto faculty)
Evaluates	- maturity test content - that the work meets the criteria - the thesis as the examiner	- that the work can be submitted to the supervisor
Is responsible for	- Examination of the thesis - Putting forth the statement and the grade proposal to the programme committee	- guidance - supporting the work during the validity of the topic
May	- be an examiner	- be an examiner - propose the approval of parts 1/3 and 2/3 to the supervisor

APPENDIX 4 Thesis evaluation transitional provision

The School of Arts, Design and Architecture master's thesis evaluation during the transitional period 1 August 2022 – 21 December 2022

Theses that have been started at latest 31 July 2022 will be evaluated on the transitional period (1.8.2022-31.12.2022) according to assessment criteria in thesis guide which was approved on 2020. In this transitional provision thesis is considered started when the topic is approved.

During transitional period students who have started their thesis work before 1 Aug 2022 have a right to an oral presentation which can raise their thesis grade. Examination sessions described in the thesis guide 2020 are no longer organized after ARTS governance model has changed 1 Aug 2022. Students who have started their thesis work before 1 Aug 2022 can have their oral presentation in public presentation sessions organized by the departments or programmes. Supervisor who is the examiner must be present in those presentations.

As of 1 January 2023, all master's theses in the School of Arts, Design and Architecture will be evaluated in accordance with the evaluation criteria appended in this guide which is effective from 1 August 2022.