**Final attainment levels**VU Faculty of Religion and Theology

The manuscript must show the following:

1. The PhD candidate has contributed to extending the frontiers of knowledge by conducting substantial and independent research that withstands the rigors of peer review.
   1. Justification of the thesis’ scholarly (and societal) relevance and imbedding in the extant academic discussions
2. The PhD candidate has demonstrated a systematic understanding of a substantial domain of knowledge and is competent in the skills and methodology needed for conducting research in this domain of knowledge.
   1. Lucidity of the research (sub-)question(s): clear description of the research problem/a niche
   2. Competence in the skills and adequate methodology and sources applied in this research in this particular discipline
3. The PhD candidate has demonstrated the ability to design, develop, implement and modify a substantial research project.
   1. Clear and substantiated answer(s) to the research (sub-)question(s)/problem that meet(s) academic standards (see below
4. The PhD candidate has demonstrated the ability to critically analyse, evaluate and synthesize new and complex ideas, as shown by the following five sub criteria:
   1. The argument follows a logical structure
   2. The argument is pursued consistently
   3. Discussion and summaries are clear
   4. Conclusions are substantive and exceed summaries in critical academic thinking
   5. Academic writing skills are solid: style is clear and smooth, the text is well-structured, spelling, punctuation and bibliographical references are consistent
5. The PhD candidate has demonstrated the ability to debate with peers from their field of knowledge and the wider scientific community regarding their specific field of expertise.
   1. If applicable with an eye to differences in interpretation and historical and social backgrounds of the various facets of the research and discussion of the implications of findings and possible future directions
   2. Originality of the dissertation (topic, methodology or outcomes)