

Masters by Research - Guide for Schools

This document is relevant for all Masters by Research programmes **except** for MSc Biological Sciences by Research.

Masters by Research programmes fall under the [Postgraduate Research regulations](#) (see appendix 1) as of 2014/15

Start Date: Students can start at any time in the academic year. The only exception would be if there are taught components (see below) which the student must complete at a set time in the programme. In such cases, they would need to start attending within 3 weeks of the start of the relevant term.

Duration: One year full-time / two years part-time.

Structure of a Masters by Research programme

Dissertation

- All programmes have dissertations which carry 180 credits.
- The dissertation length is a maximum of 40,000 words, including references, footnotes and endnotes but excluding the bibliography and appendices etc. Departments however can recommend a lower word count, as appropriate to their discipline.
- Students have the option to present in a form other than a monograph (as per the main PGR regulations).
- The dissertation should:
 - (a) synthesise knowledge from the subject or discipline and apply it to suitable research problems, hypotheses or research questions;
 - (b) provide a critical discussion of relevant major theories, debates and concepts;
 - (c) demonstrate the capacity to design and carry out an independent research project using appropriate research methods and utilizing suitable skills and techniques;
 - (d) undertake a clear analysis of the results of the project, and show informed and critical use of theories and concepts to interrogate these results/findings;
 - (e) provide a reasoned and coherent account of the main findings and their significance;
 - (f) display good presentation and referencing skills.

Research Methods taught components

- Some programmes may include a taught component which must be passed. Students taking these programmes are required to pass the taught component satisfactorily in order to qualify for the award. Students who fail the taught component will not normally be offered the opportunity to resit this component and will therefore fail the programme (Appendix 1, para. 4 of the PGR regulations)
- ML5002 - Taught course for the Schools of Humanities and Performing and Digital Arts. There is the expectation that this course will be taken by Masters by Research students in this School unless there are compelling reasons that the course is unsuitable for a particular student.
- If the programme does include a taught component, there are 4 different options available. See table on next page for an overview:

	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4
Bespoke for Masters by Research programme or current PGT course?	Bespoke for Masters by Research	Bespoke for Masters by Research	Current PGT course	Current PGT course
Credit bearing?	No	No	Yes	Yes
Weighting in outcome	0%	0%	0%	0%
Grade mode	D (first attempt)	D (first attempt)	A (audit)	E (extra-curricular)
How outcome is recorded	Pass/fail	Course mark	CM/NS (attendance only)	Course mark
New validation required?	Yes	Yes	No	No
Course registration required?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Must be passed?	Yes	Yes	Attendance required?	Yes
Recorded on transcript?	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
VE required?	No	Yes*	Yes**	Yes**

* If the course is not part of a PGT programme, one of the dissertation examiners would have to agree the results of the taught course.

** The outcome of the course should be signed off by the VE of another (PGT) programme of which this course is also part

Examination of the dissertation

Prior to submission

- The following emails regarding the submission deadline will be sent by the Doctoral School:
 - Approx. 4 months prior to deadline – clarification of deadline to students, supervisory team and academic School
 - 2 months prior to deadline – reminder to students who have not submitted their entry form (cc supervisory team, PGR Lead if applicable and Director of Postgraduate Education)
 - 1 month prior to deadline – deadline reminder to all students (cc supervisory team, PGR Lead if applicable and Director of Postgraduate Education)
- The [entry form](#) for the Masters by Research examination should be completed and signed by the candidate and the supervisor (and the Research Lead in the student's department if applicable) and forwarded to the School's Director of Postgraduate Education for consideration two months before the submission of the dissertation. Once this has been approved, the DPE will forward the entry form to the Doctoral School for processing. This allows time for the examiners to be approved and invited before the dissertation is submitted.
- As part of the entry form, two examiners need to be nominated - one internal examiner (who may have acted as the dissertation supervisor for the student) and one external examiner.
- The Doctoral School will issue the invitations to examine:
 - Alongside the invitation to examine the dissertation, the examiners will be sent guidance on the examination process and a link to the College regulations.
 - For dissertation examiners who are not Royal Holloway members of staff, the examining fee for 2022/23 is £130, paid by the Doctoral School.

Submission of dissertation

- The dissertation must be submitted within one year of the student's start date (full-time) / two years (part-time).

- An electronic copy of the dissertation should be emailed to doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk (except in cases where agreement is in place for a restriction of access for reasons of confidentiality, commercial sensitivity or patents).
- A [Declaration of number of words](#) form, signed by the candidate and the supervisor, should be submitted with the dissertation.
- Details of the required format of the dissertation can be found in the [Guidance on the format of the Masters by Research dissertation](#).

Dispatch of dissertation

- The dissertation will be dispatched by the Doctoral School to the examiners once they have both accepted the invitation to examine.
- The following paperwork will be included with the dissertation:
 - a copy of the Declaration of number of words
 - Preliminary Report form - to be completed by each examiner separately before they confer on the outcome (if no viva required) / before the viva (if a viva is required). These reports will not be made available to the students unless specifically requested by the examiners.
 - Final Joint Report form - to be completed and signed by both examiners at the end of the assessment process to indicate the outcome and to explain how the outcome has been reached.
 - List of Amendments form – to be completed and signed by both examiners if the outcome is 'Pass subject to minor amendments'.
 - The candidate will receive a copy of the Final Joint Report with their award letter at the end of the process.

Assessment of dissertation

- It is expected that an oral examination would not normally be required for a Masters by Research unless the examiners are considering a 'Resubmission' or 'Fail' outcome. However, the examiners do have the option to request this if otherwise deemed appropriate.
- Examiners are asked to return their reports on the student's dissertation to the Doctoral School within 6 weeks of the dissertation being dispatched to them.
- If an oral examination is not required, the examiners should ensure they complete their Preliminary Report and send to doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk prior to conferring with their co-examiner about the outcome.
- If a viva is required:
 - it is the responsibility of the supervisor to organise the viva
 - it is essential that the Doctoral School is informed of the date of the viva as soon as possible so that they can ensure the Preliminary Reports are received prior to the viva
 - the candidate must bring a copy of the dissertation with them which is identical in format to the dissertation submitted
 - an audio recording must be made of the viva (in addition, an Independent Chair is required by the School of Management)
- The following outcomes are available to the examiners:
 - Pass
 - Pass subject to minor corrections (to be submitted within 6 weeks of the official outcome)
 - Resubmit within 6 months
 - Fail (required level not reached and candidate is not permitted to resubmit)
- The outcome should be indicated and explained on the Final Joint Report form. If the candidate has passed subject to minor corrections, the List of Amendments should also be completed.
- The forms should be signed by both examiners and submitted to Research Degrees for processing.

Processing of dissertation outcome

- If the outcome is 'Pass', the Doctoral School will:

- ensure that confirmation has been received from the PGR Lead that any compulsory taught components have been passed.
 - send the outcome and the examiners' reports the Director of Postgraduate Education to approve on behalf of the CBEEC
 - process the outcome on Banner once it has been approved
 - send the official award letter with a copy of the examiners' Final Joint Report to the candidate.
 - send a copy of the award letter and all the reports, including the Preliminary Reports, to the supervisor (cc PGR Lead, if applicable)
- If the outcome is 'Pass subject to minor corrections', the Doctoral School will:
 - contact the candidate (cc supervisor and PGR Lead if applicable) to provide them with the list of required corrections and make them aware of their corrections deadline (6 weeks from the date of this official notification of the outcome).
 - contact the examiner who has been nominated to check the corrections to inform them of the process and to ask them to submit a 'Satisfactory Completion of Amendments' form to doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk once they have been checked (If the candidate's supervisor is the internal examiner, the external examiner must be nominated to check the corrections).
 - The candidate should not liaise directly with the nominated examiner. If there are any queries, the supervisor should contact the examiner on the candidate's behalf.
 - On receipt of the signed off 'Satisfactory Completion of Amendments' form, the Doctoral School will process the award (see above)
 - If, after minor corrections, the dissertation still fails to meet the requirements of the Masters by Research degree, the examiners will normally recommend offering the candidate the option to resubmit the dissertation within 6 months for a second and final time (see below).
- If the outcome is 'Resubmission within 6 months', the Doctoral School will:
 - send the outcome and the examiners' reports to the Director of Postgraduate Education to approve on behalf of the CBEEC
 - process the outcome on Banner
 - send the resubmission letter with a copy of the examiners' Final Joint Report to the candidate
 - send a copy of the resubmission letter and all the reports, including the Preliminary Reports, to the supervisor (cc PGR Lead if applicable)
 - The candidate will have 6 months to resubmit from the date they are sent the resubmission letter.
 - They will be billed a flat rate resubmission fee.

Resubmission of dissertation process

- Entry form: An entry form for Masters by Research resubmission should be completed 2 months prior to the resubmission.
- Nomination of examiners: It is expected that normally the same examiners as the 1st submission will be nominated, in which case the examiners do not need to go through a re-approval process. However, if it is necessary to nominate new examiners, a section is provided on the entry form to explain the reason for this and the new examiners' details will be sent to the Director of Postgraduate Education to approve on behalf of the CBEEC.
- The following processes are the same as for the 1st submission:
 - Invitation of examiners
 - Resubmission of dissertation
 - Dispatch of dissertation
- Assessment of dissertation: Same as for the 1st submission except for the outcome options. A further resubmission is not permitted so the options are:
 - Pass
 - Pass subject to minor corrections (to be submitted within 6 weeks of the official outcome)
 - Fail
- Processing of outcome: Same as for the 1st submission (except that a further resubmission is not an option)

Graduation

- To be eligible to attend the Winter Graduation ceremony, the award must have been approved by the DPE by 1 November. To be eligible to attend the Summer Graduation ceremony, it must be approved by 1 June.

If you have queries about the Masters by Research assessment process, please contact doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk.