

MPHIL and MASTERS BY RESEARCH

RESEARCH THESIS ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Please note: this candidate is to be examined at Masters level and is not expected to have reached the same level as a doctoral candidate.

The scope of the thesis/dissertation should be what might reasonably be expected after 1 year full-time or 2 years part-time study for a Masters by Research award or 2-3 years full-time or 4-6 years part-time for the award of MPhil. The thesis should not normally exceed the word limits given in the Academic Regulations.

In each of the following areas the student will be expected to:

Thesis contents

- ensure that the contents of their thesis result from their own independent work, and demonstrate a critical awareness of current issues and or new knowledge at the forefront of their field(s) of study and/or professional practice.
- show originality in the application of existing knowledge.
- use the thesis to reflect a coherent research process from the acquisition of basic data to its final conclusions and provide an underlying rationale for the research which is clear and persuasive.
- show a critical appreciation of the context of the research and its relationship to existing literature and received opinion.
- apply their knowledge, skills and understanding of advanced concepts to a complex field(s) of study and/or professional practice.
- make reasoned judgements, and understand the limitations of those made in the absence of complete data and show an appreciation of the limitations of their research and an awareness of areas worthy of further investigation.

Presentation

- lay out the thesis in a clear and readable manner with respect to both its language and structure and according to the presentation format stated in section 3.1 of the Research Student Handbook.
- make effective use of cross-references, so that the text is readily navigable in order that the reader may extract the information sought.
- use references, bibliography and any headers/footnotes, avoiding both structural and stylistic inconsistencies.

Methodology

- demonstrate that the methodologies that they have adopted and/or developed are appropriate to the research undertaken and explicitly state and justify their underlying rationale.
- Demonstrate, where relevant, that they understand and can clearly articulate any ethical implications of their research study.

- adopt and articulate clear and consistent criteria for the selection of data (or textual extracts) and the results of analyses.

AWARD DESCRIPTOR

The following award descriptor is are from *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* published by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education in January 2001. They outline the basic characteristics of study expected for Masters awards.

DESCRIPTOR FOR A QUALIFICATION AT MASTERS (M) LEVEL: MASTERS DEGREE

Masters degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated:

- i a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study, or area of professional practice;
- ii a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;
- iii originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline;
- iv conceptual understanding that enables the student:
 - to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and
 - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

- a deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;
- b demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;
- c continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;

and will have

- d the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
 - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;
 - decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and
 - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.