

Masters by Research

Definition

The Master's by Research degree is designed for students to develop advanced skills in carrying out independent and sustained research. The thesis demonstrates a critical application of specialist knowledge and makes a substantial contribution to existing scholarship in the area of research.

The titles for Master's by Research degree are MLitt., MSc. and MEngSc.

Master's by Research Regulations

1. Only those students who have obtained at least Second Class Honours, Grade II at Bachelor's or Master's level as a general rule shall be permitted to take the Master's by Research Degree. However, it should be noted that individual departments may require a higher entry requirement. Where minimum requirements are not met, but where a Head of Department feels there are compensating circumstances, approval must be sought from Faculty.
2. The subject of the Thesis must be approved by the Head of Department (Supervisory Committee). The Head of Department may, where a change in research directions occurs, make appropriate supervisory adjustments.
3. Students for the Master's by Research must work under the direction of the Supervisor/ Supervisory Team for at least one year full-time (two years part-time), and attend such modules as the Departmental Supervisory Committee have approved.
4. The student must take a minimum of 10 credits in taught modules (at least 5 in generic/transferrable modules and at least 5 in subject specific/advanced specialist modules) from the Departmental/ Institutional Structured PhD programme unless a waiver is granted by the Graduate Studies Subcommittee.
5. Normally students are required to submit their Thesis not later than three years full-time (four years part-time), after registration. In exceptional cases Faculty may grant an extension. Students must register for every year or part of year until their Thesis is completed.

Master's By Research Programme

A student must take a minimum of 10 credits in taught modules (at least 5 in generic/transferrable modules and at least 5 in subject specific/advanced specialist modules) from the Departmental/ Institutional Structured PhD programme. The supervisor, with the student and the candidate's departmental supervisory committee, agrees the specific modules. The student's original research as presented in the thesis (or in such form appropriate to their discipline) is the sole means of assessment for the award of the Master's by Research. The taught credits are used to assess annual progress and the list of modules and grades are inserted in the student's transcript.

Students are required to submit their Thesis not later than three years (full-time) and four years (part-time) after registration.

Students will not be allowed to register for a fourth year of study, unless they have approval by the Faculty. Students must apply for extension for every year or part of year until their Thesis is completed.

Route Of Academic/Administrative Progression To The Master's by Research Degree From Application To Thesis Submission

The following are the stages in the progression towards a Master's by Research degree. The student is required to complete these steps to the satisfaction of the appropriate body.

- Stage 1. Admission
- Stage 2. Induction and Agreement of Programme
- Stage 3. Progress evaluation. For details on Department requirements, and details on the Master's by Research Programme, see Research Student Handbook and Departmental Handbook on Graduate Study
- Stage 4. Thesis submission

Stage 1. Admission

To be eligible to enter a course of study and research for the Master's by Research degree in the University, a candidate must have reached a high honours standard at the Examination for the Primary Degree (normally an overall 2.2 honours award at bachelor's or master's level), or presented such other evidence as will satisfy the Head of Department and Faculty of his/her suitability.

Applicants should submit a formal Postgraduate Application to the Postgraduate Applications Centre in Galway. In the case of Non-Maynooth University applicants, the following documentation should be forwarded.

1. Copy of Birth Certificate or Valid Passport
2. Official University Academic Transcripts which include name, title of degree, date of conferring and the name of degree awarding body. Note: Students who have not yet been conferred should also submit a certified letter from their university confirming the award of the degree, the overall results and the proposed date of conferring.

Note: Documents, other than those in Irish, English or Latin, must be accompanied by an official translation into English.

3. Two Referees Reports (addressing their potential for Postgraduate Study).

Standard Applications

The Head of Department has primary responsibility for accepting or declining applications. Students will not proceed to registration until the student has correctly accepted the offer and paid a non-refundable deposit at a level determined from time to time. Subsequently, successful applicants will receive notification from the Student Records Office and Fees Office in relation to Registration Dates, documentation requirements and also fee details.

Non-Standard Applications

Certain applications may need wider consideration, for example, where minimum entry requirements (overall 2:2 honours award at bachelor's or master's level) are not met but where a Head of Department feels there are compensating circumstances.

In such cases complete application forms are forwarded by the Department to the Registrar for inclusion under Registrar's Business at Faculty Meetings. Students are informed of the decision of the Faculty by the Registrar. During the summer period a subcommittee comprising of the Registrar, the Dean of Graduate Studies and the relevant Faculty Dean may accept a non-standard application, but where the subcommittee considers the application should be rejected, it should be forwarded to the next Faculty Meeting for consideration.

Stage 2. Induction and Programme Agreement

Further to acceptance on a research programme, all research students will be invited to attend a structured programme of induction, overseen by the Dean of Graduate Studies.

Under the Framework for the Delivery of Structured Doctoral Programmes at Maynooth University, all research students will hold an introductory meeting with the Primary Supervisor, and formally outline the specific individual programme to be undertaken which will include the mix between generic/transferable modules and subject/specialist modules. The programme will be formally outlined in the Initial Meeting Record. The Initial Meeting Record will also allow agreement on a Calendar of Meetings/Frequency of Meetings for the forthcoming academic year, record attendance on the Induction Programme and ensure that the candidate is familiar with University regulations and policies. Each Student's Initial Meeting Record is then approved by the Departmental Supervisory Committee. A copy should be kept by the student and supervisor and stored in the department. The Initial Meeting Record should be forwarded to the Graduate Studies Office, with a letter from the Head of Department confirming that all first year research students have completed the Initial Meeting Record.

Stage 3. Progress Evaluation

Departments are required to review annually the progress of research students. It is recommended that the review would normally be conducted by a Departmental Supervisory Committee. The purpose of this evaluation is: to examine the student's progress; to ensure the student has sufficient knowledge of the fundamentals of the chosen discipline; to ensure the student has developed a clear plan of research and has identified a viable topic. The taught credits are used to assess annual progress and the list of modules and grades are inserted in the student's transcript.

Progress considered to be unsatisfactory may lead to a recommendation to discontinue studies at the University.

Where a prospective Ph.D. candidate has registered initially as a Master's by Research student, satisfactory progress at this stage may lead to a change of registration from a Master's by Research to Ph.D.

For details of Departmental requirements on Graduate Study, see the relevant Departmental Handbook.

Stage 4. Thesis Submission

Presentation of Thesis

A student should lodge the Master's by Research Thesis approximately eight weeks in advance of the appropriate Examination Board. Examination Boards are normally held in June and September.

In all Faculties, two soft-bound copies of the Research Thesis, the Approval for Examination, Examination Entry and Thesis Depositor Declaration Form should be sent for examination to the Examinations Office.

Each copy of the Thesis must be accompanied by an Abstract, not exceeding 300 words in length. The Supervisor confirms approval for examination of the final draft of the Thesis to the Head of Department and the Head of Department confirms approval for examination of the final draft of the Thesis to the Registrar (Examinations Office).

To be awarded a research master degree a student in pursuance of an agreed project must demonstrate a critical application of specialist knowledge and make a substantial contribution to existing scholarship in the area of research.

Examiners

The thesis should be examined by two Examiners, an External Examiner (who is an expert in the research area), and an Internal Examiner. If the student is a member of staff of the University (whether academic or otherwise and whether full-time or part-time) the Internal Examiner is replaced with a second External Examiner. In the case of a Master's by Research theses in inter-disciplinary fields, where a reasoned academic case may be made that a broader diversity of academic expertise is required to examine the thesis, the Examination Board may be extended to include an additional Internal and/or External Examiner. The Examiners must be approved by Faculty on the recommendation of the Head of Department in agreement with the Supervisor.

The Registrar (Examinations Office) forwards a copy of the Master's by Research thesis together with a copy of the 300-word summary to the Internal Examiner and External Examiner for examination.

The Internal Examiner should act as a co-ordinator for completion of appropriate forms at the end of the Examination.

Examiners Report And Recommendations

Where the Examiners are in agreement, the Internal Examiner shall submit a joint typed report to the Examinations Office for consideration by the Examination Board. Where there is disagreement between the two Examiners on the recommendation, a third External Examiner's recommendation is sought. In this case the Head of Department must nominate an additional External Examiner to Faculty and the student must lodge a further copy of the thesis with the Examinations Office.

The report should comment on:

- Quality of research contained in the thesis
- The contribution the thesis makes to knowledge and scholarship
- The written style and overall presentation of the thesis
- The nature of minor corrections required (if any)

The Examiners may recommend that the student:

1. Be awarded without further examination or amendment
2. Be awarded without further examination, subject to making the changes specified which must be subsequently carried out to the satisfaction of the Internal Examiner. (This recommendation should be applied where examiners estimate up to six weeks further work is required.)
3. Not be awarded the degree, but be permitted to re-submit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination by the same Examiners. In this case areas requiring major amendments will be detailed by the Examiners in the examination report. (This recommendation should be applied where examiners estimate that less than six months additional work is required.)
4. Not be awarded the degree, but be permitted to re-submit the thesis in a revised form for re-examination by the same Examiners. In this case areas requiring major amendments will be detailed by the Examiners in the examination report (This recommendation should be applied where examiners estimate that there is more than six months additional work required).
5. Not be awarded the degree and not be permitted to submit for re-examination.

The Degree of MLitt/MSc/MEngSc by research is awarded as an Honours degree - there is no assignment of First or Second Class Honours.

Students for the Master's by Research WILL NOT be orally examined on the subject matter.

The Internal Examiner should communicate the outcome of the Examiners assessment to the student, recommending any corrections that should be made and advising the student to submit two corrected hardbound versions of the thesis plus CD. The jointly signed Report of the Examiners should be forwarded to the Examinations Office at least one week before the relevant Examination Board once the Internal Examiner has confirmed that all recommended corrections have been made and that the results are ready to proceed to the Examination Board.

The thesis results will not be considered by Examination Board until the jointly signed Examiners Report and two hard bound copies of the Thesis incorporating the recommended changes, have been lodged with the Registrar (Examinations Office). Students must also submit a CD with an electronic copy of their thesis in secure pdf format as defined by the Library and regulations [regarding e-thesis](#).

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