

**Maynooth University
Graduate Studies**

**ROUTE OF PROGRESSION THROUGH THE STRUCTURED RESEARCH
MASTERS PROGRAMME**

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INTRODUCTION

The masters 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

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

STANDARD APPLICATIONS

To be eligible to enter a course of study and research for the master's by research, a student must have obtained at least second class honours, grade II at bachelor's or a master's level qualification or presented other evidence that satisfies the Head of Department and the relevant faculty of his/her suitability. However, it should be noted an individual department may require a higher entry requirement.

PROCEDURES FOR NON-STANDARD ENTRANTS

While there are normally defined academic entry requirements for University programmes, it is appropriate that the University has mechanisms to allow entry to applicants who do not meet the normal requirements, but who are, for other reasons, deserving of admission.

There are two processes in use:

Non standard applicants: This process is used where the case is being made that the applicant's academic qualifications should be considered as the basis for admission. In such cases, application details are forwarded by the Head of 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.

Recognition of Prior Learning (accredited learning): This process is used if an applicant is seeking exemptions from parts of a programme on the basis of prior accredited learning.

See Procedure for Non Standard Entrants and Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL).

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PROCEDURES FOR INTERNATIONAL ENTRANTS

The Maynooth University International Office (IO) reviews all Non-EU students applications. A report on the academic evaluation and the English language competency is included in the student's application on PAC. International students can only be given an offer when the IO has reviewed the application. If the IO does not recommend making an offer, an applicant can not be accepted. Students requiring visas should be accepted by end of July to enable visa application and to allow the IO sufficient time to write offer letters for immigration purposes. A department cannot supply this letter. The IO is not notified regarding the immigration status of students, rather the student is notified directly.

English Language competency (for non-native speakers of the English language)

All applicants must provide written evidence of competency in the English language. Documentation should be forwarded to PAC.

The list below outlines the minimum standards in English language which must be met for admission to the University.

- Examination Level Required
- IELTS (www.ielts.org) 6.5 overall
- TOEFL (www.toefl.com)
- 585 (Paper based test)
- 95 (Internet based test)
- PEARSON (www.pearsonpte.com) 62

If a student does not satisfy the above English language requirements the student should be directed to the International Office for advice

REGULATIONS RELATING TO FULL-TIME AND PART-TIME

RESEARCH MASTER'S STUDENT REGISTRATION

Students studying full-time should normally pursue the master's degree by research for a period of two years (full-time) and three years (part-time) from the date of acceptance.

Students must work under the direction of their supervisor for at least one year full-time (two years part-time). The maximum duration of study for a master's degree by research is three years from the date of

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admission for a full-time student and five years for a part-time student. Students may be allowed to extend beyond the normal maximum period with the permission of the registrar.

Summary: Duration of research degrees in years.

	Normal duration	Minimum duration with approval from head of dept.	Minimum duration with approval from Academic Council	Maximum duration
PhD full time	4	3	2	6
PhD part time	6	4.5	3	9
Research master's full time	2	1	1	3
Research master's part time	3	2	2	5

INDUCTION

Induction programmes are held in September and January.

The purpose of the induction programme is to promote awareness of all aspects of a student's research degree, including the preparation of research plans, performance monitoring and examination procedures. What constitutes a 'reasonable workload' and 'standard attendance' is also discussed. In addition, a student's teaching duties, rights and responsibilities, potential intellectual property issues, the rights and responsibilities of supervisors, plagiarism, safety and ethical considerations, definitions of research misconduct, basic work conditions and regulations, and the supports available from the career development centre and similar services are explained.

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INITIAL MEETING RECORD

As soon as possible after registration, the student should meet the supervisor(s) and agree an individual programme of supporting modules.

The purpose of the initial meeting is to:

- Provide an opportunity to design a unique, individual programme
- Identify modules that will enhance the student's research programme
- Identify modules that students will take in year one
- Agree a calendar of meetings
- Ensure the student attended the induction programme
- Ensure that the student is aware and agrees to the University regulations and policies as outlined in the research student handbook.

Details of the programme are recorded in the Initial Meeting Record (IMR) which is approved by the Departmental Supervisory Committee. The IMR is forwarded by the Departmental Supervisory Committee to the Graduate Studies Office (GSO) by the end of October for inclusion in the student record system. This record informs the annual progress review subsequently carried out by the student's Departmental Supervisory Committee. All students are given a specific registration date. If a student has completed their IMR before their registration date, they can register for the appropriate PhD modules at that time. However, if the IMR is not completed prior to registration, a student must register on the day indicated by Registry (records office), and choose their appropriate modules by the end of October.

[Initial Meeting Record Form](#)

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REGULATION FOR RESEARCH PROGRAMME MODULES

All structured research programmes are supported by formal accredited subject specific modules and transferable modules. Subject specific modules involve advanced specialist research level courses provide by a department/research institute or other 4th level institutions. Subject specific modules also include master's level taught modules in the discipline area or in a cognate discipline area. Transferable modules include modules offered in disciplines other than primary research areas that would enhance the student's skills development.

CREDITS REQUIRED & PROCESS FOR CREDIT WAIVERS AND COURSE VARIATIONS

A student undertaking a master's by research must take a minimum of 10 credits in taught modules (at least 5 transferable modules and at least 5 in subject specific modules) from the department structured PhD programme. The supervisor, with the student and the student'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. When a student has demons ratable prior experience or learning which duplicates the content of the taught module, the requirement to complete the taught module can be waived. The student is advised to complete the attached form [Credits Waivers/Course Variations Form](#). The programme must be approved by the Departmental Supervisory Committee and sent to the Dean of International & Graduate Studies for ratification.

STRUCTURED RESEARCH PROGRAMME MODULES

Many departments have developed their own unique programme, with a minimum / maximum amount of credits. Full details on each programme are available at:

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/study-maynooth/postgraduate-studies/phd-research-programmes>

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Subject specific modules

These modules are specialist doctoral level courses provide by a department/research institute or other 4th level institutions. This category also includes Master's level taught modules in the discipline area or in a cognate discipline area.

Transferable skills modules

Students must take a minimum of 5 credits credits in transferable modules.

These modules are designed to assist the student to develop and manage their research and future careers across a broad range of employment sectors, including academia. If a module is not part of the departmental programme, students wishing to register for a transferable module must have the support of their supervisor(s). Students must complete the [Form for registering for transferable modules](#) and forward it to Registry (records office).

Inter-university and external modules

There are a range of inter-university modules and external modules available for research students. These are usually subject specific modules. Details of the specific registration process should be sought from the module/programme coordinator, where the particular module is being taught. The candidate must seek the approval of the supervisor(s).

How to register?

1. In the case of the student undertaking an external module as part of a structured programme, when the module is complete the student should bring the transcript to their Maynooth University module/programme co-ordinator for processing.
2. In the case where the module is not listed as part of the departmental structured programme, students should complete the

[Gain Accreditation for Intern-Institutional Modules](#)

and forward the results and form to Registry (records office) for processing.

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ANNUAL PROGRESS REVIEW

The purpose of the annual review is to:

- Assess progression and grant permission to progress based on an assessment of the quality of research output to date
- Give students the opportunity to indicate their satisfaction or lack of it with their supervisory arrangements
- Discuss and record any changes to the student's individualised programme
- Ensure that students have passed their required modules before thesis submission and, where appropriate, that waivers have been ratified by the DRSPC.

In general, students are automatically progressed into year two of their programme, but a substantive review must be completed on all research students within 12 months and no later than 18 months after initial registration. This will provide supervisors and students with the opportunity to identify and rectify problems with a student's progress. Thereafter, students are assessed annually for progression by the June exam board. The Departmental Supervisory Committee can make one of the following recommendations in respect of each research student:

- Progress
- Not progress
- Change of registration from Masters by Research to PhD or vice versa.

[Annual Review Form](#)

THESIS SUBMISSION

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.

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.

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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 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 Registry (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.

[Research Masters Submission Forms \(pdf Version\)](#) (maintained by the Examinations Office)

THESIS EDITING

Professional editing services must not be used for preparation of the thesis. Students found to have used such assistance will be deemed to be in breach of examination regulations unless their thesis submission is accompanied by a letter from the supervisor sanctioning its use. It is proposed that if a supervisor deems editing necessary under particular circumstances the supervisor may request this, but should check the thesis for possible anomalies introduced in the process.

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 interdisciplinary 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.

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The Registry (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 acts as a coordinator 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 more than six weeks and less than six months additional work is required.)

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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, and the electronic copy, 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.

REGULATIONS REGARDING DEPOSIT OF THESES AT MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

Unless students request otherwise, a copy of the Thesis plus an electronic copy (on CD/DVD) of one PDF file mirroring the hard bound copy, containing the approved final version will be lodged in the University Library and in the Institutional eTheses Archive. Students will be required to complete the Thesis Depositor Declaration Form when lodging hardbound copies of the Thesis for the Masters Degree. All Theses shall remain the property of the University and may be made available in the University Library.

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The author of a thesis is required to make a signed declaration at the time of submission of the thesis for examination to Maynooth University, regarding the use the University may make of this thesis. The declaration will allow the University, at its discretion to lend or, in accordance with the Copyright and Related Rights Act 2000, copy from this thesis, upon request.

Should the author of a thesis wish to withhold permission for the use of her/his work, a written application must be made to the Dean of International & Graduate Studies at the time of submission of the thesis for examination. Such applications must have the written support of the author's Supervisor or Head of Department. This application must state the reasons for the request for a stay on access and must provide a contact address. If permission to withhold access is granted the Thesis Depositor Declaration Form must be signed by the Dean of International & Graduate Studies. The maximum length of a stay is one year/two years. During this period of withheld permission the thesis will only be consulted, lent or copied with the written permission of the author who is under an obligation to reply to all requests within a reasonable time. These requests are processed through the Dean of International & Graduate Studies. Should the author wish to withhold access beyond that time frame, s/he must make a further application to the Dean of International & Graduate Studies. A declaration form is signed by each reader to agree their compliance with the lending and copying regulations.

Date: 16th January 2015

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VERSION HISTORY

Version	Date	Summary	Changed by
1	May 2010	Masters by Research Degree Expanded explanation in light of Framework for the Delivery of Structured Doctoral Programmes	Prof Honor Fagan
2	June 2010	Masters by Research Degree	Prof Honor Fagan
3.	December 2010	Regulations for Masters by Research Changes to Thesis Editing:	Prof Honor Fagan
4	May 2011	Development of Policy and Procedures for Recognition of Prior Learning	Prof Aidan Mulkeen
5	October 2011	Change to the Masters and Doctoral Research Examination Recommendations	Prof Honor Fagan
6	May 2012	E-Thesis Archive	Prof Honor Fagan
7	September 2012	Thesis Depositor Declaration Form	Prof Honor Fagan
8	January 2015	Full-time and part-time research student registration	Prof Ronan Reilly