

# Masters by Research Assessment Process Guide for Candidates



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

## Assessment

- All Masters by Research candidates are required to submit a dissertation.
- Some programmes may include a taught component which must be passed in order to qualify for the award. Candidates who fail the taught component will not normally be offered the opportunity to resit this component and will therefore fail the programme.

## Dissertation requirements

- All Masters by Research candidates must submit a dissertation within one year (full-time) / two years (part-time) of their start date.
- The dissertation will be a maximum of 40,000 words including references, footnotes and endnotes but excluding the bibliography and appendices etc. In many cases however, your department will recommend a lower word count, as appropriate to your discipline, and it is this recommendation which should be followed.
- Details of the required format can be found in the [Guidance on the Format of the Masters by Research Dissertation](#).
- Your 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.

## Entry to the examination of the dissertation

The [entry form for Masters by Research examination](#) should be completed and signed by the candidate, the supervisor, the PGR Lead (if applicable) and the Director of Postgraduate Education and then submitted to the Doctoral School ([doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk)) **two months before the submission** of the dissertation. This allows time for the examiners to be invited before the dissertation is submitted. The Doctoral School will issue the invitations to examine.

## Submission of the dissertation

- The dissertation should be submitted within 1 year (full-time) / 2 years (part-time) of your start date.
- You should email an electronic copy of the dissertation to [doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto: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 you and your supervisor, should be submitted with your dissertation.

## Assessment of the dissertation

- A random sample of dissertations will be submitted to Turnitin to check for originality before being dispatched to the examiners.
- Your dissertation will be examined by both an internal examiner, who may have acted as your dissertation supervisor, and an external examiner.
- It is expected that an oral examination (viva) would not normally be required for a Masters by Research. However, the examiners do have the option to request this if deemed appropriate.
- If an oral examination is required:
  - this will be organised by your supervisor.
  - you must bring a copy of the dissertation with you which is identical in format to the dissertation submitted for assessment.

## Outcome of the assessment

- 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).
- If, after minor corrections, your dissertation still fails to meet the requirements of the Masters by Research degree, the examiners will normally recommend offering you the option to resubmit the dissertation within 6 months for a second and final time.
- Some programmes may include a taught component which must also be passed. Candidates taking these programmes are required to satisfactorily pass the taught component in order to qualify for the award.

## Award process

- On confirmation from the examiners that the requirements of the Masters by Research dissertation have been met and that any required taught components have been passed, the examiners' reports on your dissertation will be sent the Director of Postgraduate Education in your School for approval of the award.
- The date of your award is the 1st of the month following the Director of Postgraduate Education's approval.
- You will receive an award letter and a copy of the examiners' final joint report on your dissertation.
- The degree certificate should be issued within 3 – 6 months of the award date.

## Graduation

- To be eligible to attend the Winter Graduation ceremony, your award must have been approved by the Director of Postgraduate Education by 1 November. To be eligible to attend the Summer Graduation ceremony, it must be approved by 1 June.

Candidates are advised:

- to read this document in conjunction with the Royal Holloway [Postgraduate Research regulations](#) (appendix 1).
- to contact the Doctoral School ([doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk](mailto:doctoralschool@royalholloway.ac.uk)) if they have any queries regarding this process.