

# Academic Regulations for the Masters by Research (MRes)

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<b>Summary/Description:</b>	
The Academic Regulations for the Masters by Research provide the independent framework and criteria for the assessment, examination and awarding of this award.	

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## A. INTRODUCTION TO THE ACADEMIC REGULATIONS

### A1 Scope and Purpose

- A1.1 The role of the regulations is to maintain the quality and academic standards of the University's Masters by Research (MRes) degree programmes and to provide clear guidance for students and staff.
- A1.2 The *Academic Regulations for the Masters by Research* (hereafter known as the *Regulations*) aim to clarify the generic framework of the MRes within the University's overarching regulatory framework.
- It is intended to support programme development teams when developing individual MRes programmes in their subject areas and to ensure that the University's MRes programmes are consistent in their nature as research courses and are distinct from postgraduate taught courses. In this way a single common model across individual MRes programmes can be maintained.
- A1.3 The Research and Enterprise Committee (REC) and the Learning, Quality and Regulations Committee (LQRC) are jointly responsible for approving all amendments, additions and variants to the *Regulations* prior to their formal ratification by Academic Council.
- A1.4 The *Regulations* encompass all the University's academic provision contributing to MRes awards.
- A1.5 The *Regulations* are reviewed annually by the Academic Registry and updated to reflect any changes that may have been approved by the Research and Enterprise Committee/ Learning, Quality and Regulations Committee during the previous year. Updated *Regulations* are published annually on the Student & Academic Services website together with a clear statement about changes that have been made since the previous publication.

## B. ACADEMIC FRAMEWORK

### B1 Qualification Descriptors

- B1.1 As referred to in the QAA *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Advice and Guidance, Research Degree (Nov 2018)*, QAA *Characteristics Statement, Master's Degree (Feb 2020)*, students for the award of the Masters level awards of Masters by Research are expected to meet the Level 7 (Master's Degrees) descriptors for such awards set out in the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education, Part A: Setting and Maintaining Academic Standards – The Frameworks for Higher Education Qualifications of UK Degree-Awarding Bodies, QAA (October 2014)*.

**Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Masters (Level 7) Qualification Descriptors:**

HE qualifications as set out in the FHEQ	FHEQ level and definition		Minimum credits
Research master's degrees	7	Master's degrees are awarded to students who have demonstrated: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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</li> <li>• a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship</li> <li>• 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</li> <li>• conceptual understanding that enables the student:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline</li> <li>- to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	180

**B2 Awards**

**B2.1 Masters by Research (MRes):**

Awarded to a student who through independent research, supported by relevant taught course study can demonstrate:

- a critically investigated and evaluated approved topic, which meets the research master's degree qualification descriptors above
- an understanding of research methods applied to a chosen field, and
- present and defend a written thesis by oral examination to the satisfaction of approved examiners.

A University of Greenwich MRes requires students to complete a minimum of 180 credits, comprising 60 credits from taught courses and 120 credits from a supervised research project. Students must complete or otherwise be credited with a minimum of 30 credits at Level 7 for the taught element of the award.

**C. ADMISSION OF STUDENTS**

**C1 General Principles**

C1.1 The University's admissions policies and practices assist in meeting the strategic aims of the University and enhancing its position as a leading higher education institution.

C1.2 The University is committed to operating admissions procedures that are fair, transparent and consistent. The University strives to admit only suitably qualified applicants who have the ability to complete their programme of study successfully.

C1.3 Admission requirements for the MRes are detailed on the individual programme pages of the university's website.

C1.4 Approved programme specifications will identify the minimum entry requirements.

## **C2 Duration of Study**

C2.1 The maximum period of registration, during which a student must complete the requirements for the award of MRes (excluding the research project examination period) are:

Full-time maximum - 24 months

Part-time maximum - 48 months

C2.2 The maximum period of registration defines the period within which a student must achieve the credit required for the award. This includes any formally approved periods of interrupted study or repeat study. The period of registration will be adjusted on pro-rata basis for students who change their mode of study.

C2.3 In exceptional cases, the Progression and Award Board may approve an extension to the maximum period of registration where a student has failed to progress and can provide valid evidence of extenuating circumstances that are accepted.

## **C3 Recognition of Prior Learning**

C3.1 In the recognition of prior learning (RPL) the following principles will apply:

- a) Students may be awarded credit for prior certificated learning (RPCL) or prior experiential learning (RPEL) at FHEQ Levels 4, 5, 6 or 7.
- b) RPL credit can only be awarded for whole modules, not for part of a module.

Currency of credit:

- Formal certificated learning will normally be considered current when it has occurred up to 5 years prior to the start date of the University of Greenwich programme.
- Experiential learning will normally be considered current when it has occurred up to 5 years prior to the start of the University of Greenwich programme.
- c) Exceptions to the 5-year maximum period may be permitted where the learning is deemed still appropriate and relevant.
- d) The credit awarded for prior learning must contribute towards the achievement of the learning outcomes of the programme. The mapping of prior learning against programme and/or module learning outcomes is a matter of academic judgement.

e) Students on visas can only apply for RPL credit for up to 30 credits over the course of an academic year.

C3.2 Credits utilised in attaining an initial qualification recognised by the FHEQ cannot normally be used to secure advanced standing against another award of equivalent or lower status. Such credits are considered 'spent' as part of the certification of the initial award. Such credits, however, may contribute to a higher award in the context that the higher qualification subsumes the lower.

C3.3 In determining the maximum credits available for RPL for any award within the FHEQ, the University has sought to balance the recognition of prior learning with a desire to ensure that conferred awards reflect sufficient evidence of study having been undertaken within the institution.

The following shall apply:

AWARD	MAXIMUM RPL (CREDITS)	MINIMUM CREDITS TO BE STUDIED AT THE UNIVERSITY
Postgraduate Certificate (60 credits)	30	30
Postgraduate Diploma (120 credits)	30	90
Masters Degree (180 credits)	30	150

## D. ASSESSMENT AND EXAMINATION – GENERIC

### D1 General Principles

D1.1 All programme related assessment requirements are linked to specific learning outcomes. Students are expected to demonstrate the attainment of these in their overall performance at module level.

D1.2 Assessment is a matter of academic judgement, not simply of computation. Whilst grades provide information on which a decision about student attainment can be based, they should not be considered as absolute values or exact measurements.

D1.3 Where students cannot be assessed under normal conditions because of a disability, specific learning difficulty or special circumstances beyond their control, alternative arrangements may be made to carry out the assessment, where appropriate in accordance with the [Examinations & Assessments Regulations for Students with Disabilities, Specific Learning Difficulties and Long-term Medical Conditions](#).

D1.4 Compensation of any taught module or the research project is not permitted.

D1.5 Students must successfully complete the taught phase of the programme before being examined on the research project.

D1.6 All students will be required to undergo a formal oral examination (*viva voce*) as part of the assessment of the project for the award of MRes.

## **D2 The Progression and Award Board**

D2.1 Academic Council is responsible to the Governing Body for the regulation of the academic conditions for the admission of students to, and their progress within, the University. The responsibility for the assessment of a student's performance is delegated to the Progression and Award Board for a programme or programmes.

D2.2 The Progression and Award Board has delegated authority from Academic Council for the conferment of awards and decisions relating to the progression of students.

D2.3 Exceptionally, Chair's Action may be taken following an initial Progression and Award Board decision. In such circumstances the Chair should normally consult the External Examiner. Chair's Action decisions shall be reported at the next meeting of the Progression and Award Board.

D2.4 The Programme Leader is responsible for providing the research project mark and all marks from the taught modules to the relevant Faculty Progression and Award Board for consideration of the final award.

D2.5 Following the Progression and Award Board, a copy of the student's approved assessment profile should be forwarded to the Secretary of the Faculty Research Degrees Committee to be noted and lodged with the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

## **D3 Consideration of the research project specification**

D3.1 The Head of School, in consultation with the Programme Leader, will normally appoint two appropriate supervisors for each student. The student and supervisor(s) will work together to produce a project specification which sets out the:

- (a) aims of the research project;
- (b) proposed programme of work;
- (c) expected deliverables;
- (d) taught courses to be followed by the student in support of the research project;
- (e) key skills to be achieved during the course of the research.

D3.2 The project specification should be submitted to the Faculty Research Office within one month of completing registration with the university, for consideration by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.

## **E. ASSESSMENT IN THE TAUGHT PHASE**

### **E1 Credit Requirements for Progression and Conferment Purposes**

E1.1 Each programme will have clearly defined credit requirements which a student must satisfy in order to gain the award for which they are registered.

E1.2 All progression is based on credit accumulation and conforms to the FHEQ expectations of attainment (see B1.1).

E1.3 Each module shall have clearly defined, discrete assessment requirements which a student must satisfy in order to pass the module and gain the credits associated with that module.

## **E2 Gaining Credit and Progressing**

E2.1 Students gain credit by achieving the learning outcomes either by passing a module through assessment or through a successful claim for prior learning.

### **Passing a Module**

E2.2 Students must attend examinations and submit work for assessment as required by the stated deadlines; they must ensure that they are aware of these deadlines and comply with university procedures governing student academic conduct.

E2.3 Any mark given to a student is provisional until ratified by the Progression and Award Board.

E2.4 Students' work will be graded numerically or on a pass/fail basis.

E2.5 The pass mark for all courses pertaining to the MRes are defined as 50% for Level 7 courses and 40% for all Levels below.

E2.6 Credit shall be awarded for those modules in which the overall grade achieved is the minimum mark as in E2.5 above, or RPL has been agreed.

E2.7 Coursework submitted up to ten working days after the official submission deadline will be accepted and marked. If it meets the criteria for a 'pass', the mark will be capped at the minimum pass grade for that item of assessment.

E2.8 Coursework will not be accepted later than ten working days after the deadline for submission. In such circumstances, a non-submission and 0% or 'fail' will be recorded against this item of assessment.

### **Use of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) credit**

E2.9 Any credits gained via RPL will not be graded for the University of Greenwich award unless it has been recognised as a result of a Faculty's external Credit-Rating activity or where there is an agreement with another Higher Education Provider to recognise such transfer of grades.

E2.10 Credits awarded for prior learning alone do not provide usable credit for the purposes of entitling a student to an exit award at an equivalent or lower level within the FHEQ.

## **E3 Reassessment**

### **Generic**

E3.1 Where a module has been failed, the Progression and Award Board will take into account the degree of failure on the student's profile to determine the manner and timing of reassessment.



- E3.2 Candidates who fail to retrieve the initial failure at the following opportunity will normally, at the discretion of the Progression and Award Board, be allowed only one further opportunity to be assessed, in a manner determined by the Board. Therefore students may be allowed three opportunities to pass an individual module. The Progression and Award Board may exceptionally permit a fourth and final opportunity at their discretion and will be guided by consideration of the overall programme profile and the academic progress made by the student.
- E3.3 Students who do not demonstrate academic progress and/or engagement may not be considered for a reassessment opportunity by the PAB except where extenuating circumstances have been accepted.

### **Resit**

- E3.4 Where the Progression and Award Board has determined that the student is given the opportunity to resit failed modules (all or some elements of assessment), reassessment will normally be permitted prior to the commencement of the student's next academic stage of study.
- E3.5 Regulation E2.7 will not apply for resit opportunities.
- E3.6 Retrieval of failure obtained by resit will result in component capping i.e. the minimum pass grade will be recorded for those elements that were reassessed. The Progression and Award Board shall have the discretion to utilise the higher of the two grades received to determine the final component mark to be recorded. The overall grade for the module will not be capped.
- E3.7 Where component capping has produced an overall module fail but the grade(s) achieved would have resulted in an overall module pass had they been achieved at the first attempt, the Progression and Award Board shall have the discretion to confirm the overall module grade with a pass mark.

### **Repeat**

- E3.8 Where the Progression and Award Board has determined that the student is required to repeat the failed modules (all or only failed components of assessment), reassessment will be permitted in the student's next academic year.
- E3.9 Retrieval of failure obtained by repeating a module(s) will result in the overall grade attained being recorded for progression and classification purposes.
- E3.10 Where the failed module is an option module, the student may substitute an alternative module by agreement with the programme leader. Previous opportunities must be included as part of the total number of opportunities to achieve a pass.
- E3.11 Students repeating a module in a subsequent year will not be assessed in modules which are no longer current in the framework but will be offered an opportunity to achieve a pass on an alternative module.

## **E4 Reassessment with Accepted Extenuating Circumstances**

- E4.1 The Progression and Award Board will take account of the outcome of a successful claim for extenuating circumstances in determining a progression or final award decision.
- E4.2 Students who have an accepted extenuating circumstances claim for deferral or impaired performance will be considered for a reassessment opportunity. This does not apply to assessments solely for which an extenuating circumstances extension request has been granted.

### **Reassessment following an accepted deferral claim**

- E4.3 The Progression and Award Board will consider the student's overall profile in determining the timing of the reassessment opportunity as either:
- A deferred resit – the reassessment opportunity will be taken during the resit period prior to the commencement of the student's next academic stage of study; or
  - A deferred repeat – the reassessment opportunity will be taken in the student's next academic year.
- E4.4 The deferred reassessment will be treated as a first attempt and the regulations for passing a module in section D5 will be applied to the deferred reassessment.

### **Reassessment following accepted impaired performance**

- E4.5 Where a student has passed an assessment at the first attempt and been offered a reassessment opportunity to improve their existing grade following impaired performance, the Progression and Award Board will apply the following:
- Where the student undertakes the reassessment opportunity, the higher of the two grades received will be used;
  - Where the student accepts the offer of reassessment but fails to undertake the reassessment, the existing grade(s) will be confirmed.
  - Where the student declines the opportunity to undertake the reassessment opportunity, the existing grade(s) will be confirmed. It will also be deemed that the opportunity has been declined if the student fails to respond to the offer of a reassessment opportunity by the deadline.
- E4.6 Where a student has failed an assessment at the first attempt, E4.3 and E4.4 will apply.

## **F. EXAMINATION OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT**

### **F1 General Principles**

- F1.1 Assessment of the project is based on the outcomes as judged by:
- The final project report submitted by the student;
  - An oral examination chaired by an approved Independent Chair

### **F2 Request for examination of the research project**

- F2.1 All students will be required to take a formal oral examination (viva voce) as part of the assessment of the research project for the award of MRes.
- F2.2 Proposals seeking approval of examination arrangements should be submitted on [Form RDA6a/b](#) with the appropriate documentation for consideration by the Faculty Research Degrees Committee.
- F2.3 Approved examination arrangements normally remain valid for a period of three months from the date of approval by the Committee and the examination should occur within this time.
- F2.4 If the examination is not able to be undertaken within the three-month time limit, the supervisor(s) must apply for a three-month extension by:
- a) Where there are no changes to the original proposal, making a written request to the Committee to extend the existing approval of the examination arrangements or;
  - b) Where changes are required to the information contained within the original proposal, a new Form RDA6a/b must be submitted.

Only one such extension may be made.

- F2.5 Once the application for examination arrangements has been approved, the student and supervisors are not permitted to initiate contact with any member of the Examination Panel at any time during the examination process, from approval of the arrangements through to the time of their oral examination.

### **F3 Examination Panel**

- F3.1 Membership of an approved Examination Panel will normally be:
- Chair
  - One internal examiner
  - One external examiner
- F3.2 The oral examination process will be overseen by an independent Chair and will be conducted by two suitably qualified examiners, defined as one internal to the university, but independent from the student's work, and the other external to the university.
- F3.3 The Chair is not an additional examiner, the role is to act in an independent capacity to ensure a fair assessment of the student. A Chair will:
- a) Have previous experience of being an internal and/or external examiner for Master of Philosophy (MPhil) and/or Doctoral (PhD/EdD) on no less than three previous occasions and;
  - b) Be independent from the two examiners and;
  - c) not be the student's supervisor or any other person closely involved with the student's work
- F3.4 The internal examiner will:
- (i) possess a demonstrable level of expertise in the area of the student's project

- (ii) normally have had previous experience of examining and/or have supervised to completion a minimum of two research degree students at Masters Level
- (iii) not be the student's supervisor or any other person closely involved with the student's work
- (iv) normally be an appropriately qualified contracted member of academic staff of the University
- (v) not be a registered postgraduate research student at the University or any other Higher Education Institution

F3.5 The external examiner will:

- (i) be a permanent member of academic staff of another recognised university
- (ii) have expertise directly relating to the student's topic of research
- (iii) normally have had previous experience of examining and/or have supervised to completion a minimum of two research degree students at Masters level
- (iv) be independent of the University and any collaborating establishment
- (v) not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser
- (vi) not be, or have been within the previous three years, a supervisor of another student in the same School at the university
- (vii) not have been employed by the University within the previous three years
- (viii) be able to demonstrate an understanding of examining at MSc level in the United Kingdom, or in a country that operates a MSc examination system similar to that of the United Kingdom

External examiners may be drawn from the Faculty's approved pool of external examiners for taught Masters awards, providing they meet the requirements set out above.

F3.6 At least one of the examiners must have experience of examining a minimum of two research degree students at Masters level.

F3.7 Where the student is a member of staff of the university, two external examiners will be used.

F3.8 Where no suitable internal examiner is available, two external examiners may be appointed.

F3.9 If the student was a member of staff at the University at the time of initial registration on the programme but subsequently leaves its employment, they will be treated as a member of staff for the duration of their studies.

F3.10 Where the Panel contains two external examiners, neither view takes precedence over the other.

## **F4 Oral Examination**

F4.1 A student will normally be examined orally on the programme of work and on the field of study in which the programme lies. Where, for reasons of sickness, disability or comparable valid cause, the Faculty Research Degrees Committee is satisfied that a student would be under serious disadvantage if required to undergo a conventional oral examination, an alternative form of examination may be approved. Such approval will not

be given on the grounds that the student's knowledge of and ability in spoken English is inadequate.

F4.2 The oral examination will be held either:

- (i) at the University and will be conducted on a face-to-face basis, and not by electronic means; or
- (ii) by video-conference, in accordance with the *Guidance for Conducting Oral Examinations by Video-Conference*.

F4.3 The student must attend the oral or other approved form of examination on the agreed date. If circumstances arise which prevent the student from attending their oral examination, they must submit a claim for extenuating circumstances using the [Extenuating Circumstances Procedure](#).

## F5 OUTCOMES

F5.1 The examiners will recommend a mark which falls within one of the following outcomes:

a) Pass (50% or higher)

The project is deemed to be of MRes standard in terms of substance and structure. The examiners will jointly agree a mark for the project. Students must submit a final pdf version of the project to RETI.

b) Fail - resubmit same project (40 - 49%)

- i) The project is deemed to be of MRes standard in terms of substance, but amendments and corrections are required to the satisfaction of the internal examiner. No further oral examination will be required.
- ii) Student to resubmit amended thesis to RETI for consideration within 3 months of the formal Faculty Progression and Awards Board decision. Upon approval, Programme Leader to take the decision to the appropriate Faculty Progression and Awards Board; mark to be capped at 50%.
- iii) If not approved, normally only one further opportunity to submit the amended thesis will be permitted within the approved timescales.
- iv) If the thesis is not amended to the satisfaction of the internal examiner following the second submission, the outcome will be considered a Fail – submit new project.

c) Fail – submit new project (0-39%)

- i) The project is not deemed to be of MRes standard in its present form. Student and Supervisors will be required to submit a new RDA1M for consideration by FRDC. Upon approval, student must resubmit a new RDA6a and draft thesis within 12 months of the formal Faculty Progression and Awards Board decision.
- ii) Upon approval of the RDA6ab, a new examination will be arranged in accordance with section F.2 (above)
- iii) Following the completion of the of the re-examination process, the examiners will assign a new project mark. If the project receives a mark of 50% or higher, this will be considered a pass but capped at 50% by the Faculty Progression and Awards Board.
- iv) If the project receives a mark of 40-49%, the student will be allowed one further opportunity to resubmit (per F2.9 b) above)

- v) If the project receives a mark of 0-39% the Faculty Progression and Awards Board may recommend an Exit award

F5.2 Following the conclusion of the oral examination, RETI will be responsible for forwarding the RDA10 to the Programme Leader.

## **G. EXAMINERS FOR TAUGHT MODULES**

### **G1 Taught Modules**

G1.1 For every programme or group of modules leading to a qualification awarded by the University there shall be at least one examiner who is external to the University whose primary role is:

- i) to verify that academic standards are appropriate for the qualification, or part thereof, which they have been appointed to examine;
- ii) to ensure national comparability of academic standards;
- iii) to ensure that the assessment process is rigorous, fair and fairly operated, in line with the University's policies and regulations.

G1.2 The External Examiners Handbook sets out the principles and requirements governing:

- i) the functions of an External Examiner
- ii) the nomination, appointment and induction of External Examiners
- iii) the preparation and submission of External Examiner reports
- iv) the University's consideration of and responses to External Examiner reports.

## **H. ACADEMIC APPEALS**

H1.1 Academic appeals against decisions of the Progression and Award Board relating to the MRes programme will follow the processes and procedures set out in the university's [Academic Appeals Procedure \(Taught Awards\)](#).

## **I. CONFERMENT OF AWARDS**

### **I1 Degree classification**

I1.1 Conferment of an MRes Degree will be based upon the average of grades achieved in all taught elements and the research project.

I1.2 An MRes award may be classified as a Pass, with Merit or with Distinction.

I1.3 The conferment of an MRes with the classification of Merit is permitted where students obtain an average of 60% across the programme as a whole.

I1.4 The conferment of an MRes with the classification of Distinction is permitted where students obtain an average of 70% across the programme as a whole.

## **I2 Exit awards**

- I2.1 The Progression and Award Board may also confer a Postgraduate Certificate (PGCert) to a student who successfully completes, or is otherwise credited with, at least 60 credits, of which at least 30 must be at Level 7 or above.

## **I3 Issue of award certificates**

- I3.1 The certificate available to a student will be that specified in the regulations for the programme on which they are registered. Unless specified in the regulations, an interim certificate will not be awarded to a student who is continuing to the final award.
- I3.2 Unless the award is made by an external body the certificate will be in the format approved by the University.

## **I4 Posthumous awards**

- I4.1 In the unfortunate event of a student death, the deceased student will be recommended for the award of MRes. Where all the required assessments for the award were completed at the time of death, the conferment and any classification will be considered under I1.

Where the required assessments were not completed at the time of death, the appropriate exit award will be conferred.