

GRADUATE SCHOOL

MASTER BY RESEARCH HANDBOOK

In choosing to study a Masters by Research (MRes) you will undertake an in-depth research project. You will immerse yourself in a subject, developing specific research skills that allow you to investigate it and at the end produce a thesis for examination.

An MRes may appeal if you enjoyed/are enjoying working on your final year project/dissertation and are considering a PhD in the future and/or a career in research. This award may also be suitable for people undertaking research in a work-based context wishing to gain an academic qualification, or seeking to answer a work-related issue.

Like all of our research awards, you will be expected to work independently with guidance from your supervisory team and with the support of a vibrant research environment (see below). Some research projects may mean that, at times, you will need to work away from campus.

ADVANTAGES OF STUDYING A MASTERS BY RESEARCH

- Independent study opportunity to develop your own area of interest
- Excellent preparation for research and development opportunities in the commercial world or for a research career in the public or private sector
- A solid foundation for undertaking a PhD.

WHAT WILL I STUDY?

Your research project will typically include:

- A research question(s) i.e. what do you want to investigate?
- A literature review to demonstrate your critical awareness of the current problems in the field of study or professional practice
- An appropriate and justified methodology
- Information and data collection
- Data analysis and a report of the findings
- Discussion to evaluate the contribution of the work to the literature
- Recommendations for theory and/or practice.

RESEARCH ENVIRONMENT

As a research student, you will be part of the research community of students within the Graduate School, Research Student Society and locally within your school. There will be many opportunities to meet fellow research postgraduates via participation workshops,

student conferences and research cafes (which are more informal, relaxed conversations about many topics) designed to enhance both your academic and transferable skills.

SUPERVISORY TEAM

To support you in your studies you will be allocated a supervisory team: a Director of Research and a supervisor.

Your Director of Studies (DoS) will:

- Keep up to date and understand the academic regulations and all policies and procedures relating to research degree programmes.
- Provide guidance on your work and the standard expected throughout the programme of study and monitor your progress.
- Provide guidance on the planning of the research programme, including literature, sources and appropriate methodologies.
- Maintain regular contact and be reasonably accessible.
- Provide clear, constructive feedback within an appropriate timescale.
- Communicate any inadequacy of progress or standards of work below those expected as soon as possible.
- Keep you on track to meet all milestones within the timescales, especially thesis submission, and, for part-time MRes students, progression.
- Review and signpost training needs and development opportunities.
- Propose to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC) the names of examiners for the thesis.

Your supervisor will:

- Support the work of the DoS and provide appropriate subject specialist and/or general guidance to you.
- Maintain contact with you and the DoS with sufficient frequency to ensure that the DoS is aware of the progress being made.
- Share concerns about any lack of progress or issues.

Making the most of your supervisory meetings

The formal supervisory meetings are an opportunity for you to discuss your research, progress, challenges and concerns. You will need to provide an update and evidence of what you are currently working on and what work needs doing. If you wish to discuss your written work, you should remember to send it to your supervisory team two or three weeks in advance so that they have the opportunity to read it and provide constructive feedback.

These meetings will help you develop an effective working relationship with your supervisory team. Try to make these meetings as constructive as possible.

Frequency of supervision meetings and record keeping

Formal supervision meetings take place once a month for full-time students and once every two months for part-time students. Contact may, of course, be more frequent.

Feedback on your work will play an important part of these meetings as well an opportunity to discuss any training needs. You should make notes of the meeting and then agree them with your supervisory team. The notes must be kept in the preferred online system, PebblePad, or in a Word document, for the duration of your study.

PebblePad can be accessed via: <https://my.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/> (This takes you to the login to MyBeckett and then choose the Research tab).

Use of the meeting notes

The written notes will act as a reminder of the discussion and the work that needs to be done in the days and weeks following the meeting. If you are a part-time student then these meeting notes may also be reviewed during your annual progression meeting.

What happens if something goes wrong?

The relationship between you and your supervisory team is very important. If, for whatever reason, this relationship breaks down or a member of your supervisor team is set to leave the university, you should talk about this with your supervisory team. If you do not feel comfortable talking to your supervisory team or the issue persists, you can talk confidentially to members of the Graduate School or your school's Director of Research and/or Director of Postgraduate Programmes.

Changes to the supervisory team will only occur when:

- A member of the supervisory team leaves the university
- There are exceptional circumstances.

In either case, the supervisory team, following discussion with you, will be required to put a request to the RDSC to make changes to the team.

STARTING YOUR MRes

After you have accepted your place at the university, you will need to enrol online and will be invited to the Research Student Induction.

The Induction will cover everything you need to know about studying at Leeds Beckett University, the key milestones and the support available. You will hear from professional services and academics, and will be able to share your research with other research students.

LENGTH OF STUDY

Full time: 1 year

Part time: 2 years

WORD LENGTH (maximum)

Science and engineering	19,000 words
Other areas	30,000 words
Creative Practice:	The production of an art work or portfolio with accompanying narrative/analysis of 10-12,000 words

TYPICAL STUDENT LIFECYCLE

Full Time	Part Time	Activity	Key Research Training
Week 1		Induction	
1 to 3 months	1 – 6 months	Confirm research question(s) Prepare Literature Review How to write critically Choose methodology Ethics submission and approval (where appropriate)	<p>Methodology A series of workshops on methodologies will be available. Your supervisory team may also indicate some taught sessions.</p> <p>Research ethics The university expects all research undertaken by staff and student complies with the legal requirements for the UK and/or the country of location of the research project. Every research student needs to comply with our ethical procedures and policy.</p> <p>Referencing The university uses Harvard style referencing and has produced 'Quote, Unquote' to guide you. Please familiarise yourself with this guide from the outset of your course.</p> <p>Copyright There may be times during your research when you will need to use copyrighted items such as images, text or videos. To understand what you can and can't use, please use the library's Copyright Clearance Service.</p>
3 to 9 months	8-18months *	Start data collection Analysis and reflection Synthesis and Evaluation	
9 to 11 months	18 to 23 months	Complete writing the thesis, proof reading and	
12 months	24 months	Completion of thesis and submission	
	24 + months	Examination, examination outcome	

***Part time students will have one annual progression before they enter the second year of study.**

RESEARCH TRAINING PROGRAMME

As an MRes student there is no requirement to produce a formal research training portfolio. We would expect however, that you engage with the research training programme and any development days which include a range of training to develop your research and key transferable skills. In addition, your school may offer separate subject specific training and development.

PROGRESSION

(applicable to part-time MRes students only)

The progression panel meeting is a very important milestone as it is the official mechanism by which you will be permitted to continue with your studies into your second year. Its purpose is to ensure that the quality of work is at postgraduate level, the research is warranted, that you have a strong grasp of the topic area and rationale for the study. Whilst the thought of being interviewed by senior academics can be quite daunting, the process is meant to be supportive and helpful.

The progression panel normally consists of two senior academics in your or a closely related field. There will be representation from the Graduate School. Supervisors are also encouraged to attend. However, panels will still go ahead without your supervisory team in attendance.

Organisation of the annual progression meeting

The progression meeting usually takes place in the month before you are required to **re-enrol online**. For example, if you started your course in February, you can expect to attend your progression meeting in January of the following year. At this time, you must also have confirmed that you agree to pay the next year's fees, or have provided your sponsor letter. For more information, please click [here](#).

The Graduate School organises the progression meetings and the dates are set a year in advance. The Graduate School will contact you and your supervisory team by email to arrange the meeting. You are responsible for ensuring that you confirm and attend your annual progression meeting and that you submit an annual progression report, with your supervisory team's comments and Director of Studies sign-off, to the Graduate School within the deadline - the deadline dates will be in the Graduate School email. Failing to do this could affect your progression and you may not be able to take up your next year of study.

What is expected – your progression document

For the annual progression, you and your supervisory team will complete a [short report](#). The report should be no more than 500 words and should discuss the past, present and future of your studies. For example:

Student input

- Work you have completed during the previous year
- What your current work entails
- Future plans – how you are working towards the end of your programme
- Identify any training and develop needs
- Ethical issues and/or approval
- If you have had difficulties which you feel have hampered your progress, you must provide evidence of the extenuating circumstances and details of your discussions with your supervisors
- A timeline of when and how you expect to complete your thesis.

Supervisor input

- Comment on your performance and progress to date
- Highlight achievements, issues or concerns.

What will the panel be looking for?

The panel will have read your report prior to the meeting and will have prepared questions. The meeting will last no more than 30 minutes. There is no need to prepare a presentation. However, for some subjects, it might be sensible to prepare some visual material to show what you are doing. Your supervisors will advise you on this and it might be worth discussing the type of submission at a supervisory meeting prior to the Progression meeting. Please remember that the progression meeting is supportive and it is a good opportunity to share your research so far.

The format of the meeting will be:

- A pre-meeting between the panel to discuss the documentation submitted and prepare questions.
- You will usually be asked to outline your work orally and then respond to questions from the panel (normally a maximum of 20 minutes)
- A discussion regarding your work/progress and future work.
- A representative from The Graduate School may discuss any issues relating to fees and registration.
- The panel's conclusions will be discussed with you and outcome confirmed. This may include recommendations for you and your supervisors to consider.

OUTCOMES

You will receive an outcome immediately after the meeting. The annual progression panel has the authority to decide the following outcomes:

- Continue. **[You need to re-enrol, immediately and continue with your studies]**
- Continue with a written warning. **[You need to re-enrol immediately, continue with your studies and ensure that the areas of concern which the panel have identified are rectified within the timescale given]**

➤ **Withdraw. [You will be advised by the Graduate School on what happens next]**

You will be notified by the Graduate School in writing of the outcome and any work to be undertaken as part of the conditions of continuing on your programme.

The outcomes of annual progression will be reported to the next meeting of the RDSC.

Progression meeting (additional)

During the academic year, if there are issues or concerns with your progress, a meeting may be arranged to discuss your problems and the provision of appropriate support. This meeting can also serve as a follow up to the annual progression should you receive the outcome ‘continue with a written warning’.

EXAMINATION PROCESS

The taxonomy below highlights what is expected at Masters level and what the examiners will be looking for in your thesis. It is good to have this in mind throughout your studies but particularly when completing your thesis.

Table X: Leeds Beckett Taxonomy (2015)

Domains	Level M (Masters)
Technical capabilities	Select/adapt/combine/create/apply tools and techniques appropriate to novel situations to achieve innovative solutions.
Organisation and Planning	Negotiate, set and meet own objectives and deadlines over extended periods of time with a high level of autonomy involving risk management and the sensitivity and ethical organisation of others, with appropriate reference to their cultural/social/political backgrounds and contexts.
Communication	To communicate effectively in a wide range of formal styles appropriate to and consistent with the chosen cognate area and audience, maximising the potential to influence policy and practice.
Group/Inter-personal	Interact effectively and ethically with individuals and groups in varied settings and with sensitivity to equality, diversity and culture, to achieve an identified research activity. Clearly delineate negotiate and subscribe to agreed parameters of responsibility in group/team settings and ventures.
Information/Data Collection	Carry out a systematic literature search, identifying and critiquing sources relevant to the field of research. Make reasoned judgement regarding the appropriateness of a range of typologies of methods and instruments for data/information collection. Adapt and apply methods of instruments appropriately to novel situations/contexts with due concern for matters of reliability and validity.

Theory and principles	Identify, critique and apply appropriate subject-specific theories, methods and strategies for the investigation and solution of identified issues/problems.
Analysis and Interpretation	Critically analyse problems and issues in detail using the main theoretical perspectives of the cognate area and use robust research methods and strategies in the investigation.
Application	Apply knowledge, theory, methodology and strategies in informed and valid ways, demonstrating experimental/research rigour in finding new solutions to identified issues/problems.
Reflection	Give deliberate thought to the critical consideration of issues from a range of diverse settings and the methods, process and outcomes by which new solutions or actions emerge and can affect self and others.
Synthesis and Evaluation	Critically evaluate outcomes and relate them to existing knowledge structures and methodologies. Review the validity of theoretical perspectives, methods and strategies applied suggesting further topics for research.
Creativity	Propose novel solutions and modifications by combining different sources of information in new patterns. Generate, critique and apply new areas for investigation.

Submission of your thesis

This section explains the process by which your work will be examined. To aid the process, you should inform the Graduate School, by email, one month before you intend to submit your thesis. An example of how the thesis should look can be found in Annex 1. Please be aware that it will take several months to arrange the examination.

Type of examination

It is normal that your thesis is examined without you having to undertake a viva voce examination (where you verbally defend your thesis). However, the examination team can request a viva voce if they feel it necessary. If this happens to you, it is not necessarily a bad thing (examination teams may wish to meet the brilliant academic who has written something so wonderful – really!), but you will need to prepare for the process, so contact your supervisor to arrange a mock viva ahead of the real thing if you are called for a viva (see Examination section in Research Student Handbook).

The examination team

Your supervisors will put together an examination team based on the subject of your research and they will make a formal application to the RDSC for approval. The RDSC will discuss the experience of the team and whether it has the appropriate subject expertise, and it will establish its independence from your supervisory team (so that the university can be reassured the process is robust and fair). Only when the RDSC approves the team can arrangements be made for the examination. The committee's decision is final.

The examination team will be set up as follows:

One external examiner – this will normally be an academic member of staff from another institution or a professional who has expertise in your area of work.

Note: university staff members who are also students will require **two external** examiners. If you are a member of staff, a graduate teaching assistant or have another type of staff/student contract but leave employment within the year prior to submission, it is likely you will still require two external examiners. Your examination arrangements will be discussed by the RDSC, with all decisions made on a case-by-case basis.

One internal examiner – a member of the university's academic staff but not one of your supervisors.

Your supervisory team should let you know who is in the examination team so that you can familiarise yourself with their work. **However, you should not make contact with the examination team under any circumstances.** Any contact could compromise the independence of the examination team and threaten the integrity of the process. If you contact your examiners the process of establishing a new team would have to begin again. This will leave you subject to a delay in achieving your award. It may also result in disciplinary procedures.

It is a pass/fail award. The examiners will, in the first instance, recommend either that you be granted the award or that you be offered the opportunity to resubmit your thesis with corrections, which they must detail. Even after a second reading, the examiners could still decide not to make the award.

EXAMINATION OUTCOMES

The candidate receives the award.

The candidate receives the award subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within a one month period.

The candidate is permitted to re-submit for the award.

Examination Reassessment outcomes

The candidate receives the award.

The candidate receives the award subject to minor amendments being made to the thesis within a one month period.

The candidate shall not receive the award.

CONFIRMATION OF AWARD

When the examiners decide an award can be conferred, all relevant paperwork will be forwarded to the chair of the university Research & Enterprise Committee, or nominee of the Chair of the Committee, for final approval.

Final submission of your thesis

Once you have received confirmation that the award has been granted, you will need to prepare your final thesis – this should be hard bound for deposit in our library. Details of how you should do this, along with information concerning graduation, will be sent to you by The Graduate School. Click [here](#) for more information on the format of your final thesis.

Graduation

Once your award has been confirmed, you will be invited to the next graduation ceremony. These are usually held in July.

You will be asked by The Graduate School to provide a 25-word outline of your research, which will be added to the ceremony programme. It will also be read out at the ceremony (if you are attending), so choose your words carefully; they will need to reflect your research but also be understood by a diverse audience.

Appeals

If you feel that you have been unfairly treated during your programme of study, then you may have grounds for appeal. Please note that you cannot appeal on academic grounds. For more information, please see: [Academic Regulations Section 9](#) and [Student Hub 'Appeals'](#).

Complaints

The Graduate School will attempt to resolve concerns or complaints informally. However, if you wish to make a formal complaint, please follow our Student [Complaints Procedure](#).

For changes in circumstance which require a request to the Research Degrees Sub-Committee (RDSC)

Please see the Research Student Handbook section 8

For all university policies please see Research Student Handbook Section 1: Key Information about our university

ANNEX 1:

Everyone's thesis is different, but the following may help you to think about what sorts of things need to be in your thesis and how it might be structured. Compulsory elements are the abstract and the bibliography. No thesis ever does well without an introduction, a conclusion and a range of evidence chapters.

Different subject domains have slightly different emphases. Discuss what your contents page should look like at an early stage with your supervisors. Practice-based work can come in many forms and therefore the candidate must find, in consultation with their supervisor, the most suitable method to clearly communicate their work to the examination team. This may include documentation such as still photography or moving images. Some candidates choose to include their visual documents in the accompanying narrative/analysis whereas others may wish to keep the record of their practical submission separate from the writing.

SAMPLE CONTENTS PAGE

Abstract

This defines the nature and scope of your thesis and defines the contribution to knowledge it makes.

Acknowledgements

This is not compulsory, but it is customary to thank people who have been helpful in the completion of your study and to acknowledge permissions from interviewees or holders of rare materials, etc. Ask your supervisor for details.

Chapter 1. Introduction

What is your thesis about? What questions does it set out to answer? What is your hypothesis, and (in brief) how do you set out to test it? Have your objectives been met?

Chapter 2. Literature review

Your survey of the field. This is how you establish that your work is 'filling a gap' in the literature.

Chapter 3. Methodology

What methods are available for this kind of study? Which ones have you selected and why? What gaps might there be in your choices, and why do you think your chosen method is most effective?

Chapter 4. Data and Results

The things you have found out from pursuing your methods.

Chapter 5 Discussion

Continuation of this discussion in a different arena.

Chapter 6. Conclusions.

Is your working hypothesis supported by your findings? What are the specific answers to your original research questions? Can you establish that your objectives have been met? Are there helpful suggestions for future directions for this kind of work?

Bibliography of works cited

Appendices

Whether these are necessary depends on the type of research study, but it might include things like transcripts of interviews, facsimiles of unpublished source data or archive material. Talk to your supervisors about this element

Abstract

Your thesis must contain an abstract. The abstract should be about 300 words and provide a synopsis of the thesis. It should consider:

- The nature and scope of the work undertaken.
- The contribution made to new knowledge within the subject.

The abstract heading should include:

- The name of the author.
- The award title.
- The title of the thesis.

The abstract should be positioned after the title page but before the contents page.

Bibliography of works cited

Using the [Harvard Style of referencing](#), you will be required to produce a list of all the materials cited in your thesis.

Other information required (if appropriate)

If your research programme is part of a collaborative group project, you will need to indicate in the thesis your contribution and the extent of the collaboration.

You are free to publish aspects of your research in advance of the examination, but you must make reference to it in the thesis. Copies of published work should be bound in with your thesis or placed in a secure pocket at the end of the thesis.

CONTACT

If you have further questions about the administration of your MRes or a question about student development please contact us:

Research Student team Brontë: 216/226 T: +44 (0)113 812 7337
E: researchstudentadmin@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Staff and Student Development team Brontë: 210 T: +44 (0)113 812 9041
E: researcherdevelopment@leedsbeckett.ac.uk