## Information for examiners, supervisors and candidates for the degree of MPhil and other research degrees at Masters Level

Note: The official regulations for higher degrees in all Faculties are given in the Quality Manual at <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/research-degree-progs/pgr-regs-higher-docs.aspx>

**1 Descriptor for a qualification at Masters level:**

These are awarded to students who have demonstrated:   
(i) 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;   
(ii) a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship;   
(iii) 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;   
(iv) conceptual understanding that enables the student:

to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline; and

to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.

Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:   
(a) deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences;   
(b) demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level;   
(c) continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills to a high level;   
and will have:   
(d) the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:

the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility;

decision-making in complex and unpredictable situations; and

the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.

2. The thesis must be prepared in a satisfactory manner. The subject manner must be clearly and precisely expressed, its arguments logical and intelligible, and its language appropriate. It must show that the candidate not only had ideas, but also has the power of putting them into suitable words.

3. The thesis must be the result of the candidate’s own work. This requirement does not preclude a candidate obtaining **limited** assistance with the **routine** collection and/or processing of data under guidelines and instructions clearly devised by the candidate. When such help is obtained it should be with the prior approval of the supervisor who must be satisfied that the spirit of the ‘own work’ requirement is not breached.

4. Prior publication of papers arising from the research being undertaken will not prejudice the assessment of the thesis by the Examiners.

5. A *viva voce* examination may be required by the Examiners, in which case it will include questions designed to ascertain that the thesis embodies the result of the candidate’s own research. It will also test the candidate’s general comprehension of the field of study within which the subject of his/her thesis falls, and the candidate’s acquaintance with the general literature of his subject.

**Options available to the Examiners**

6. **Award of MPhil or other award at Masters Level**

1. The examiners may recommend the award of MPhil or other research degree at Masters level without conditions.
2. If candidates have shown that they have reached the standard required for the MPhil degree, but have submitted a thesis which is marred by minor errors, the Examiners may recommend the award of the degree subject to the correction by the candidate of the minor errors to the satisfaction of the Examiners. The time allowed for this will either be one month (for example, in the instance of a small number of typographical errors), or three months. The three-month period will be selected when the amendments are those not requiring external academic reassessment, e.g. extensive typographical errors, minor re-organisation of material, addition of supplementary material to clarify the content of the thesis, or removal of extraneous text. It is the responsibility of the Internal Examiner to verify that minor corrections have been made.

**Referral**

1. If candidates have presented an adequate thesis but have not shown in the *viva voce* examination (where held) that they possess the necessary knowledge of the general field of scholarship to which the thesis belongs, the Examiners may recommend that they should re-present the same thesis and submit themselves for a second *viva voce* examination.
2. If candidates have presented a thesis which, though inadequate in its present form, nevertheless contains work indicating that the standard required for a Masters Level research award may be reached, the Examiners may recommend that they should re-submit the thesis in a revised form, and may or may not require that they submit themselves a second time for a *viva voce* examination after a further period of study not exceeding one calendar year. If this recommendation is selected, the candidate will pay a re-submission fee and both examiners will undertake the re-examination.

**Failure at Masters Level Standard**

1. If the thesis is in the judgement of the examiners a long way below the Masters Level standard with no possibility of reaching this standard after re-submission, the examiners may recommend that the candidate has failed the examination for MPhil or other qualification at Masters level, that no degree will be awarded and no re-submission be allowed. This option should only be selected by the examiners in exceptional circumstances.

RDC/Guidance/MPhil/5/2008