

## UNIVERSITY OF EXETER

EDUCATION COMMITTEE, 10 June 2008

Master by Research (MA / MSc by Research)1 Introduction

- 1.1 At its meeting on 28 May 2008, the Board of the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies endorsed a proposal for a new one year full time Master by Research programme, to be offered in addition to the current suite of taught and research Masters programmes. This paper seeks Education Committee's support for the necessary amendments to University Ordinances and Regulations to introduce the new degree.

2 Background

- 2.1 The University currently offers taught Masters programmes, including both conventional Masters and research training Masters (e.g. the MRes), as well as the MPhil research degree programme. The taught Masters programmes, worth 180 credits in total, are taught over one year full time and two years part time and are assessed by coursework, exams and a dissertation. By contrast, the MPhil programme is taken over two years full time and four years part time and is assessed by written thesis and viva, as with the PhD.
- 2.2 A number of universities, including Durham, have introduced a new research Master degree, typically called an MA by Research or MSc by Research, depending on the discipline. This new degree, available over one year full time or two years part time, can be taken as a stand alone qualification or as the first step towards doctoral studies. As with other research degrees, it is examined by thesis and viva. The programme is aimed in particular at those, often international candidates, who want a qualification with a significant research element but who are not necessarily planning to progress to doctoral studies.
- 2.3 There is a known demand for such a programme. Following a recent senior staff appointment, the School of Geography, Archaeology and Earth Resources has a number of potential applicants who would like to commence study in 2008/09. In addition, several other Schools have expressed an interest in being able to offer such a programme.

3 Masters by Research

- 3.1 There is untapped demand for the proposed new Master by Research degree. It may also help, through targeted conversion activity, to increase PhD student numbers. And while the new degree will not improve overall PhD completion rates, it will not damage them as weaker students will not be permitted to transfer to MPhil/PhD studies.
- 3.2 The new Master by Research degree is similar in design to the current MPhil degree. It will have similar entry requirements, examination procedures and award criteria. The two key differences are that the degree is taken over one

year full time or two years part time (compared with two years and four years) and the maximum length of the thesis is 40,000 words (compared with 60,000 words for an MPhil and 100,000 words for a PhD).

- 3.3 As with other research students, candidates registered on Masters by Research programmes may be required to 'audit' all or part of certain modules, following a training needs analysis. The host School will need to give careful consideration to the number of modules that a student may reasonably be expected to attend whilst working on their thesis. Like other research students, candidates will be members of the University Graduate Research School and will have access to the University Effective Researcher Development Programme run by Education Enhancement.
- 3.4 The fee level, as for other generic research degrees, will be set by the DVC Resources. It is envisaged that, as with the MPhil and PhD awards, there will be a standard University wide fee, with exceptions being considered and approved on their merits.
- 3.5 It is envisaged that many of the potential candidates for this new research degree will not wish to proceed to doctoral studies. However, where a student does wish to pursue their studies, an application for transfer will need to be made and considered in the normal way after nine months of the programme. It will be a matter for the host School, in consultation with the student and taking into account the circumstances of each case and the policy of the School, to decide whether the student should transfer to an MPhil or directly to a PhD programme. Where a candidate is allowed to transfer to an MPhil/PhD programme, they would not receive the award of Master by Research.

#### 4 Consequential amendments to University Ordinances and Regulations

- 4.1 Amendments to University Ordinances and Regulations necessary to introduce the new Master by Research are attached at Appendices A and B. Minor amendments to the University codes of practice are also required and, subject to approval of the new degree, will be made over the summer recess.

#### 5 Recommendation

- 5.1 Education Committee is invited to:
- (a) RECOMMEND TO SENATE approval of the amendments to University Regulations at Appendix A; and
  - (b) RECOMMEND TO SENATE AND COUNCIL approval of the amendments to Ordinances at Appendix .

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Dean of the Faculty of Postgraduate Studies

June 2008

## REGULATIONS GOVERNING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES

## 2 FACULTY OF GRADUATE RESEARCH

## 2.13 REGULATION GOVERNING THE DEGREES OF MASTER OF ARTS BY RESEARCH AND MASTER OF SCIENCE BY RESEARCH

## 1 Eligibility

1.1 The following may apply for registration for the degree of Master of Arts by Research or Master of Science by Research ("Master by Research"):

(a) Graduates of the University

(b) Graduates of other Universities and Institutions of Higher Education approved by the Senate

(c) Other persons who can satisfy the provisions of Ordinance 9.1.

1.2 Applicants will normally be expected to have at least a Second Class Honours degree or to have reached an equivalent standard in a General or unclassified degree or other qualification.

1.3 Applicants whose native language is not English will be required to provide evidence of competence in English Language sufficient for research study, and after admission to the University may be required to take additional instruction in English Language, normally in the University English Language Centre.

## 2 Registration of Candidature

2.1 Registration shall be effective not earlier than the beginning of the term in which the candidature is formally approved.

2.2 Subject to the approval of the Dean of the Faculty, candidates registered at the University for another degree of Master or for the degree of Master of Philosophy may be allowed to transfer their registration to the degree of Master by Research and to have all or part of the period of study completed under the original registration counted towards the period required under the new registration.

## 3 Conditions of Study

3.1 Candidates will be registered as full-time or as part-time students under supervisors approved by the Head of School or appropriate recognised academic unit.

3.2 Full-time candidates shall follow approved programmes of research for a maximum period of one year. Part-time candidates shall follow approved programmes of research for a maximum period of two years.

#### 4 Continued Registration

- 4.1 A candidate who fails to make satisfactory progress may be required to withdraw.
- 4.3 Each candidate is required to re-register at the beginning of each academic year until the required dissertation has been submitted.
- 4.4 Candidates may, with the approval of the Head of the School, be registered on Continuation Status provided they have completed their research and will not be undertaking any significant additional research.
- 4.5 Full-time candidates may not register for more than two years and part-time candidates for not more than three years. In exceptional cases the Dean of the Faculty may grant a stipulated period of extension

#### 5 Assessment

- 5.1 Each candidate will be required to submit a dissertation in the prescribed form which shall not exceed 40,000 words excluding bibliography, appendices and abstract and may be required to take a *viva voce* examination..
- 5.2 The dissertation may not normally be submitted before the first day of the last term of the stipulated period of study. In exceptional cases the Dean of the Faculty may approve earlier submission.
- 5.3 A candidate may not include in the dissertation material previously submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other university.
- 5.4 Candidates must submit two printed or type-written copies (which shall include a summary of approximately 300 words).
- 5.5 When ready to apply for the dissertation to be examined, each candidate shall submit an application form which shall include an undertaking that all the material in the dissertation which is not the candidate's own work has been identified and that the dissertation does not include any material previously submitted and approved for a degree.
- 5.6 In assessing the dissertation, the examiners will require:
  - (a) evidence that it extends the knowledge of the subject;
  - (b) evidence of the candidate's ability to relate the subject matter of the dissertation to the existing body of knowledge within the field;
  - (c) a satisfactory level of literary presentation.
- 5.7 When the examiners consider that a dissertation does not reach the standard required for the degree of Master by Research, it shall be within their discretion to make one of the following recommendations:
  - (a) that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate making minor amendments to the dissertation to the satisfaction of one or more of the examiners, as may be agreed between them.

(b) that no degree be awarded but that the candidate be permitted to submit a revised dissertation..

- 5.8 In making their recommendation, examiners may take into account any circumstances which may make it impracticable for a candidate to undertake a further period of study.
- 5.9 When making recommendations (a) or (b), the examiners are required, when making their final report to the Dean of the Faculty, also to indicate for the information of the candidate the reasons for their decision, and where amendments are required (whether minor or revisions prior to re-submission) to indicate those aspects or parts of the dissertation which they regard as inadequate and the nature and extent of the re-writing required.
- 5.10 A dissertation may be re-submitted on one occasion within such period of further study as the examiners recommend and the Dean approves. A candidate preparing for re-submission will be required to maintain registration as a continuing registration student.
- 5.11 On examination of a re-submitted dissertation, if the examiners again consider that a dissertation does not reach the standard required for the degree of Master by Research, it shall be within their discretion to make one of the following recommendations:

(a) that the degree be awarded subject to the candidate making minor amendments to the dissertation to the satisfaction of one or more of the examiners as may be agreed between them.

(b) that no degree be awarded.

## 6 Staff Candidates

- 6.1 Full-time members of the academic staff in the categories of Professor, Reader, Senior Lecturer, Lecturer and Research Fellow may apply for registration as candidates for a degree of Master by Research. No period of study will be prescribed for such candidates.
- 6.2 Other full-time employees of the University and all part-time employees may apply for registration.

## ORDINANCES: Amendments underlined

## 5 Titles of Degrees

The following degrees may be awarded:

## 5.2 Degrees awarded after programmes of Advanced Study:

Master of Arts (MA); Master of Business Administration (MBA); Master of Education (MEd); Master of Engineering (MEng); Master of Engineering (European) (MEng (Eur)); Master of Fine Arts (MFA); Master of Laws (LLM); Master of Research (MRes); Master of Science (MSc); Master of Science (European) (MSc (Eur)).

## 5.3 Masters Degrees by Research:

Master of Arts by Research (MA); Master of Science by Research (MSc);  
Master of Philosophy (MPhil).

## 5.4 Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Clinical and Community Psychology (DClinPsych); Doctor of Education (EdD); Doctor of Educational Psychology (DEd Psy).

## 5.5 Higher Doctorates: Doctor of Divinity (DD); Doctor of Engineering (DEng); Doctor of Laws (LLD); Doctor of Letters (DLitt); Doctor of Science (DSc).

## 5.6 Degrees jointly awarded with the University of Plymouth under the Regulations for the Peninsula College of Medicine and Dentistry and the Peninsula Postgraduate Health Institute:

Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery (BM, BS); Bachelor of Medical Science (BMedSc); Master of Arts (MA); Master of Science (MSc); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Master of Surgery (MS); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD).

9 Masters Degrees by Research9.1 Candidates for the degrees of Master of Philosophy, Master of Arts by Research and Master of Science by Research shall be graduates or able to satisfy the Senate by their qualifications or experience of their fitness to enter the programme of study.

## 9.2 Candidates shall be required to present a dissertation following the period of study prescribed in Regulations under the supervision of academic staff appointed by the Senate.

## 9.3 The Senate shall appoint at least two examiners of whom at least one shall be external to the University.

## 9.4 The Degree of Master of Philosophy may, in appropriate cases, be awarded to

candidates who have submitted theses for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

30 Programmes of Study Pursued Wholly or in Part in Institutions Associated with the University

30.2 In accordance with Section 28(2) of the Statutes, the University will also permit, in place of attendance at the University, attendance by its students at programmes as specified in Schedule B below which are offered elsewhere in conjunction with a School or other academic unit of the University.

The inclusion of programmes in Schedule B shall be with the agreement of Senate on the recommendation of the Boards of the Faculties of Taught Programmes or Graduate Research as appropriate.

#### SCHEDULE B

1 MA by Research, MSc by Research, MPhil or PhD: Attendance at an institution or a research establishment recognised for the purpose in Regulations

2 Such programmes as may from time to time be approved by Senate on the recommendation of the Boards of the Faculties of Taught Programmes or Graduate Research as appropriate.