Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Framework

Policy Category:	Academic – Student
Subject:	Postgraduate Taught Dissertations
Approving Authority:	Academic Board
Responsible Officer:	Vice President (Education & Student Success) and Executive Director, Student and Academic Services Directorate (Academic Registrar)
Responsible Office:	Student and Academic Services Directorate
Related Procedures:	N/A
Related College Policies:	Academic Regulations Mitigating Circumstances Policy Interruption of Study Policy Feedback Policy
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Supersedes:	Core Code of Practice for Postgraduate Taught Research Governance and Dissertation Framework
Next Review:	1 September 2027

PURPOSE & SCOPE

This framework outlines key principles and good practice for all matters concerning postgraduate taught dissertations and equivalent major projects. This framework is comprised of the following documents:

- Policy
- Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Models
- Associated Templates and Guidance

The framework aims to ensure that students are effectively supported and supervised throughout the process and are able to develop their academic skills and research practice.

This framework sets out the minimum requirements and expectations of faculties and students in the completion of the postgraduate taught dissertation/major project assessment and should be read alongside the Academic Regulations and relevant programme specification. The policy and models within this framework must be complied with, however the University recognises that some variation in dissertation practice across a large and diverse institution is inevitable. Therefore this framework does not include overly prescriptive requirements for all aspects of the process and the policy specifies where discretion may be used. Faculties/departments may choose to develop local guidance/handbooks that supplement the content within this framework.

The terms 'dissertation' and 'project' are used interchangeably throughout this document and have been interpreted in their broadest sense. The different types of dissertation/major project models adopted by the University and covered in this framework can be found in Appendix 1.

This framework does not apply to postgraduate research students or the supervision of these students. The framework for postgraduate research students can be found in Chapter 6 of the Academic Regulations and further advice can be sought from the Doctoral College.

POLICY

1. Introduction

1.1 This policy informs and supports the process of undertaking and completing a postgraduate taught dissertation/major project and should be used by both students and staff at the University.

1.2 The QAA Framework for Higher Education Qualifications (FHEQ) states that master's degrees typically include 'planned intellectual progression that often includes a synoptic/research or scholarly activity'. In line with this, a postgraduate taught degree at King's College London will normally include:

- a research project in a form appropriate to the discipline concerned as a core component of the programme; and
- some part of the curriculum should be concerned with research methods including awareness of ethical issues and, where relevant, health and safety matters.

1.3 In accordance with the QAA FHEQ level 7 descriptors and the University's Academic Regulations, master's degrees will be awarded to students who have demonstrated the following:

- 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.
- a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.
- a conceptual understanding that enables students:
    - to critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline.
    - to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
    - to demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level.
    - a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.

1.4 The holder of a master's degree from the University will be able to:

- Deal with complex issues, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their decisions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences.
- Demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks.
- Continue to advance their knowledge and understanding, and to develop new skills.

2. Master's Degree Structure

2.1 In line with the QAA FHEQ and Master's Degree Characteristics, the dissertation/major project is a core requirement of a taught master's degree at King's College London and is the key element distinguishing the master's degree from a postgraduate certificate or postgraduate diploma programme. The dissertation/major project usually equates to 60 credits and must adhere to one of the models listed in Appendix 1. MRes degrees have different requirements and models (see Appendix 1).

2.2 A suitable topic for the dissertation/major project must be agreed by a date specified by the faculty/department. There are several ways in which this may be agreed, but the process should be made clear to students in their student handbook (or equivalent). For example, some programmes

produce lists and award projects on a first-come, first-served basis; others allocate the supervisor based on the topic the student has devised, or the student and supervisor may arrive at the topic together.

2.3 Each faculty in the University should have a named Postgraduate Lead who has oversight of all taught postgraduate matters within their faculty. This would typically be a specified individual role, which may have other duties attached to it (for example, oversight of personal tutoring). Alternatively, there may be a Postgraduate Committee (or equivalent).

In this structure, schools/departments have a responsibility to nominate an individual/s who leads on dissertation and supervision matters locally (this may be delegated to programme level). This individual/s exercises overall responsibility for the dissertation/major project process within their school/department/programme and would typically be accountable for the oversight and delegation of the various responsibilities listed in this policy.

Where faculties do not have local schools/departments, the faculty Postgraduate Lead has overall responsibility for the dissertation/major project process within their faculty and should delegate the responsibilities listed in this policy.

3. Structure of Supervision

3.1 The role of a supervisor is to support the student with help and guidance throughout the dissertation/major project. The relationship between supervisor and supervisee should be built on clear communication and mutually agreed expectations as per this framework, in terms of planning, progress and the type and amount of support provided.

3.2 Students should understand what they can expect from the supervision process, and faculties can address this through a variety of methods. For example, it may be appropriate to hold an introductory workshop/session at the start of the process. As a minimum, information should be provided in the student handbook (or equivalent) (see Appendix 2).

Supervisor Allocation

3.3 The nominated Postgraduate Lead (or equivalent) in a school/department/programme should ensure that all students within a cohort are able to access suitable supervisory support.

3.4 Each student will be allocated a supervisor at an appropriate point on their programme. In some faculties this may be an equivalent point of contact, for example module convenors may assume this role for programmes that operate a practice-based research project model. The department/school/programme is responsible for the process of allocating a supervisor. Where students are responsible for devising their own research topic, the department should support them in identifying a relevant staff member to discuss this with.

While students may have opportunities to provide input into the process of supervisor allocation, students should not be solely responsible for identifying and approaching a potential supervisor and the nominated Postgraduate Lead (or equivalent) in a school/department/programme should have oversight of the allocation process.
The process by which a student is allocated a supervisor should be outlined in the student handbook (or equivalent).

3.5 All supervisors should normally be staff members of King's College London. Graduate Teaching Assistants are not typically permitted to supervise master's dissertations, although they may contribute in an advisory capacity towards projects. If a department wishes to appoint an external supervisor who is not a member of staff at the University, the local Postgraduate Lead (or their nominee) must ensure that the supervisor is informed of their responsibilities towards their supervisees.

The Supervision Process

3.6 The student has primary responsibility for initiating contact with their supervisor. The supervisor has a responsibility to offer a timely response to a student's request for contact and to communicate their availability.

3.7 The student and supervisor should agree a timetable at the beginning of the process, which may involve setting relevant milestones, deciding a schedule of meetings or specifying appropriate contact points. This timetable should not be seen as fixed and may be revisited throughout the process at the request of the supervisor or supervisee where it becomes apparent that amendments may be required.

3.8 At the start of each academic year departments are responsible for communicating any cut off point dates for formal supervision. Departments must ensure that an alternative point of contact is available for students to contact throughout the duration of this process with any urgent queries, and this named contact should be clearly communicated in student handbooks (or equivalent).

3.9 The student and supervisor should agree the format of their supervision meetings at the beginning of the process. Meetings may be held individually or as a group depending on the type of dissertation/major project. Meetings may be held online where appropriate, and this should be agreed between the student and supervisor. Supervisors may have the right to require a student's presence on campus if this is in line with the student's programme specification, but in most scenarios the mode of meetings will be a negotiation between supervisor and student.

3.10 It is good practice for both the student and supervisor to keep a record of the supervisory process. A record reminds both parties of the deadlines agreed and any action points noted, and helps to prevent misunderstandings. A record can also be motivating for the student, as it shows the evolution of their project over time. The supervisor and student should agree how they will keep a record at the beginning of the process, which may involve following a standardised departmental approach. A sample supervision record form can be found in Appendix 3.

4. Responsibilities

Responsibilities of students

4.1 Students should:

- Take responsibility for their own academic work, including familiarising themselves with this framework, the Academic Regulations and the academic requirements of their Faculty/Department.
- Be aware of their responsibilities in relation to academic integrity, research integrity, intellectual property rights, any relevant PSRB requirements, ethical approval procedures, health and safety procedures and, where relevant, the University's Student Travel Policy.
- Take responsibility for meeting any required deadlines that will support the supervisor allocation process, for example by submitting a project proposal on time.

- Take responsibility for making initial contact with their supervisor, which should normally be within the first few weeks of being allocated to their supervisor.
- Take the initiative to propose and agree a schedule of work with their supervisor at the start of the process, which would typically include relevant milestones and a schedule of meetings.
- Inform their supervisor of any change in circumstance that may affect the progress of their work.
- Respond to communications from their supervisor and/or department in a timely manner.
- Take responsibility for the submission of their dissertation/major project and meeting the submission deadline.
- Take the initiative in raising problems with their department (see section 7).
- For students who are undertaking a period of 'off-campus' study or are conducting research in another organisation (such as in industrial or clinical settings), they should ensure they know who to contact in an emergency or if there is a cause for concern.

Responsibilities of supervisors (or equivalent)

Supervisors should:

4.2 *Early guidance*

- Familiarise themselves with this framework and any relevant Faculty/Departmental guidance relating to the supervision of postgraduate taught students.
- Agree a schedule of work with their supervisee at the start of the process, which would typically include relevant milestones and a schedule of meetings.
- Where required, notify their supervisees of their obligation to obtain ethical approval and support them with the application process.
- Where required, notify their supervisees of their obligation to complete health and safety risk assessments and ensure that these are read and signed in a timely manner.
- Assess the feasibility of the project, where appropriate, to ensure that it can be completed within the prescribed time frame.
- Confirm that, where they are required, all equipment, facilities and technical support needed for the completion of the dissertation will be in place when the student needs them.
- At the start of the process, supervisors should, where appropriate, give guidance about the nature and planning of the project and the standard expected from a master's student, about literature and sources of information, about requisite techniques or methods, and about the legal, ethical and professional norms of research.

4.3 *Contact with supervisees*

- Supervisors should be available for students throughout the dissertation period during working hours (subject to 3.8 and the bullet points listed below) and should ensure students are provided with their professional contact details at the start of the process.
- Supervisors should be contactable during the summer vacation period and should provide students with suitable notice of intended vacation periods where supervision will not be possible. Any standardised cut-off points for supervision must be communicated at the start of each academic year (see 3.8).
- Whilst students are responsible for initiating contact with their supervisor, if a supervisor has not received any communication from a supervisee within six weeks of being allocated, the supervisor should notify the relevant department/programme team.

- Supervisors should maintain contact throughout the process and should respond to communications from their supervisees in a timely manner. Care should be taken not to rearrange meetings at short notice unless in exceptional circumstances.
- Where the supervisor has a prolonged absence for more than one month, for example due to illness, they are responsible for notifying their school/department so that alternative arrangements can be put in place for supervision.
- Supervisors must take an inclusive approach to their supervisory responsibilities and should be equipped to signpost students that may require additional academic support.
- Supervisors should take particular care with students who are undertaking a period of 'off-campus' study and that a named individual is in place 'off-campus' for support as needed. The named individual should be made aware of their responsibilities to contact the supervisor if there is a cause for concern.
- For work that will form part of the final assessed material, supervisors should be able to indicate to the student the general standard of work in progress and relate this to relevant marking criteria. This work could include, but is not limited to, a draft chapter, a draft literature review, or a draft presentation.
- Supervisors should familiarise themselves with relevant University policies and support services, such as:
    - Mitigating Circumstances Policy
    - King's Academic Skills for Learning
    - Disability Support & Inclusion
    - Counselling & Mental Health Support Services
    - KCLSU Advice

4.4 Supervisors are not responsible for/not expected to:

- Chase students who fail to arrange or attend scheduled meetings.
- Ensure that the work is of sufficient quality to pass.
- Ensure that the dissertation/major project is submitted on time by the specified deadline.
- Grant extensions to deadlines.
- Whilst the supervisor should be able to signpost students to University support services and relevant policies where appropriate, they are not expected to offer pastoral support to students as part of the supervision structure.

Responsibilities of Faculties/Schools/Departments

4.5 Faculties/Schools/Departments should:

- Ensure that there is a named individual/named individuals who are responsible for dissertation/supervision matters locally (see 2.3).
- Familiarise themselves with this framework, the Academic Regulations and any relevant associated policies, and ensure that the requirements set out in this framework are adhered to.
- Ensure that there is a clear and robust process in place for the allocation of supervisors, and that supervisors are allocated within the time specified to students.
- Exercise overall responsibility for safety and provide appropriate training and information through the nominated Health and Safety Officer (where appropriate).
- Ensure that relevant content in student handbooks/guidance is accurate and reviewed annually (see Appendix 2).
- Help to identify and disseminate good practice identified with regard to postgraduate research activities.

- Ensure that there is a clear and robust process in place for students to raise issues/local complaints about the supervision process (see section 7).

These responsibilities may be delegated to programme level where appropriate.

5. Research Ethics

5.1 All research carried out within the University should be conducted with integrity and with adherence to high ethical standards. This applies to all members of the University community, including both staff and students.

5.2 The supervisor is responsible for ensuring their supervisees have been made aware of the requirements for ethical clearance. It is good practice for supervisors to discuss this with their supervisees early in the process, so that their research activity is not delayed.

5.3 Ethical clearance is required for all primary data collection involving human participants, certain types of research involving pre-existing human data/tissues and, in some cases, research that does not involve human participants but indirectly presents sensitive issues or has social or environmental implications. Students and staff may seek advice on ethical clearance from the Research Governance, Ethics & Integrity Office. Instructions on how to apply for ethical clearance can be found here.

5.4 Under the University ethical review system, the supervisor is responsible for authorising any application form. The supervisor should not authorise the application for submission until they are satisfied that it meets the standards required by the review body.

5.5 Only data that has been collected after ethical clearance has been granted can be used towards a King's College London qualification and retrospective approval will not be granted. Students should be aware that conducting research without ethical approval will be investigated as misconduct.

5.6 The student should also ensure that their research complies with any relevant legal and regulatory standards, as well as professional codes and local guidelines for conduct.

5.7 Certain types of research may require review by an external body, as opposed to an internal University review. In such scenarios, supervisors are responsible for ensuring their supervisees are aware of the requirements. Further guidance can be found here.

6. Feedback

6.1 It should be made clear to students that feedback can be provided in a variety of ways and that advice given verbally in meetings should be considered feedback. All feedback on dissertations should follow the key principles outlined in the Feedback Policy.

6.2 It is good practice to establish an informal agreement on how much reasonable notice a supervisor should receive in order to provide feedback on a draft, and equally, what is a reasonable time for a student to produce a draft. The timescales for the consideration of drafts may be set locally by departments/schools/programmes, and this should be clearly communicated to students.

6.3 All students are entitled to receive formative feedback (this may be written or verbal) on at least two occasions, which should be:

1. Feedback on a project proposal/plan (or equivalent) at the start of the process. Where the initial proposal/plan needs to be revisited due to substantial changes, a student is entitled to ask for further feedback on the proposal/plan on one further occasion.
2. Feedback on at least one draft chapter. Students are responsible for ensuring that any drafts are sent to their supervisor in a timely manner ahead of any published deadlines. Feedback may not be provided if the draft is not received by the supervisor in a reasonable timeframe.

6.4 Students who fail their dissertation are entitled to receive one further opportunity for formal feedback during the resubmission period.

6.5 Faculties have the direction to determine local expectations that go beyond these minimum requirements. There should be a standardised approach to feedback in the faculty/department/programme and this should be clearly and consistently communicated to students.

7. Resolving Issues

7.1 Normally, when issues arise in the supervision process students should initially raise matters with their personal tutor, programme leader or dissertation module leader (or an equivalent member of staff the student is familiar with). This member of staff should assist the student by giving confidential advice and help in resolving difficulties. Where there is significant concern, confidentiality is not guaranteed and other University processes may need to be considered.

7.2 Where matters cannot be resolved and/or where there is a significant breakdown of relations between the student and supervisor, the issue should be escalated to the nominated Postgraduate Lead in the department/school (or their nominee, or an appropriate equivalent). At this stage it may be appropriate to arrange a replacement supervisor if it is not possible to resolve the issue, or if any party feels that it is warranted.

7.3 Schools/departments should ensure that the process for raising issues is outlined in the student handbook and/or equivalent supervision guidance, which should include the contact details for the nominated Postgraduate Lead (or equivalent).

7.4 Formal complaints about supervision should follow the University's Complaints Policy and Procedure (see section 12 below).

7.5 Where a supervisor has a prolonged absence for more than one month or leaves the University, the department/school is responsible for ensuring that suitable arrangements are put in place so that the affected students receive appropriate support and supervision.

8. Marking

8.1 All dissertations should be marked in accordance with the College Marking Framework.

8.2 As part of their duties, External Examiners should be provided with the feedback and marks of both markers, along with a note of how the final mark has been agreed.

8.3 The supervisor can act as the first marker or as the second marker of a dissertation, or may be independent from the marking process, but there should be a standardised approach to this in the

department. Further information about the reconciliation of marks between markers can be found in the College Marking Framework.

9. Mitigating Circumstances

9.1 It is recognised that, during their studies, students may encounter challenging circumstances or experience significant personal difficulties that are outside their control. Where this impacts their ability to complete their dissertation/major project, they may use the University's Mitigating Circumstances Policy to request an extension to their submission deadline.

9.2 Faculties should ensure that any implications of deadline extensions are made clear to the student before the extension is granted. This would normally include a consideration of the student's expected date of award and graduation.

9.3 Where a student has experienced difficulties with the supervision process, it would not normally be permitted to cite this as grounds for Mitigating Circumstances. It is the student's responsibility to raise any issues with their department, and the department's responsibility to rectify any issues as quickly as possible (see section 7 above).

9.4 Absences for relevant training or time spent in industry would not normally be grounds for Mitigating Circumstances.

10. Attendance and Interruption of Study

10.1 Students should inform their supervisor of short periods of absence during term-time, for example due to illness.

10.2 During the recognised summer vacation period, postgraduate taught students are expected to engage with their dissertation/major project.

10.3 It is recognised that an occasion may arise where a student needs time away from their studies for a defined period. A request for an interruption of study is normally initiated by a student on a voluntary basis, but faculties may also advise this as an appropriate course of action in line with a student's personal and academic circumstances. Generally, if a student has completed all taught elements of their programme and is completing their dissertation/major project during the summer period, a Mitigating Circumstances request is usually the preferred method of support. However, in exceptional circumstances an interruption of study may be appropriate at this point in the programme. All options should be discussed with the student and any request should be considered in line with the University's Interruption of Study Policy.

10.4 Where a student interrupts their study part-way through the dissertation/major project process, it may be necessary for faculties/schools to appoint an alternative supervisor upon the student's re-enrolment (for example, if the original supervisor has left the University during the period of interruption). This should be discussed with the student as part of their re-engagement plan.

11. Student Feedback

11.1 The University participates in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES), which gives postgraduate taught students an opportunity to feedback on their dissertation/major project experience. It is acknowledged that many students will be in the initial stages of this by the time PTES

closes, and therefore its value as a conduit for feedback on this theme may be limited.

11.2 In addition to PTES, all programmes are expected to have local processes in place to collect feedback from students regarding the dissertation/major project and supervisory experience. It is good practice that this feedback is ongoing throughout the process rather than solely after completion and submission. This may be achieved through student representatives, student forums or town halls, drop-ins, online forms, module evaluation forms, etc.

11.3 It is expected that programmes/departments make note of and, where appropriate, take action in response to, feedback from students about their postgraduate student experience, including their dissertation and supervisory experience.

12. Complaints and Appeals

12.1 Initially, students should aim to resolve any issues with the dissertation and/or supervision process locally within their department (see section 7 above). Students should use the University's Complaints Policy and Procedure if they are dissatisfied with the outcome of a local, informal resolution.

12.2 Postgraduate taught students may submit academic appeals, but this cannot be used to challenge academic judgement. The grounds on which a student can submit an appeal can be found in the Academic Regulations.

13. Review and Approval

13.1 This Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Framework will be reviewed every three years. A revision may be carried out sooner where there is a change in applicable sector best practice guidance or legislation.

13.2 All dissertations/major projects must follow one of the models outlined in this framework (Appendix 1). If faculties wish to use an alternative model or to propose a new model that is not listed in this framework, advice should be sought from Academic Regulations, Quality and Standards (ARQS).

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Models

The dissertation/major project must follow one of the models outlined below.

Typically, dissertation/major project modules will be comprised of one singular summative assessment. However, where appropriate to the discipline, it may be possible for faculties to devise dissertation/major project modules that are comprised of multiple summative assessments, provided that the overall assessment output meets the requirements of one of the models outlined below. For example, the dissertation component may be reduced in weighting and may be supplemented by an assessed project plan/proposal, presentation, a poster, a viva, or a research article. In this scenario, the dissertation would be reduced in word count, but the overall combined workload of the module should equate to 12,000-15,000 words, or as otherwise stipulated in the model. The research dissertation/major project component should contribute the most weighting to the module overall in order to satisfy the requirement that research is a core component of a King's master's degree.

For the 2024/25 academic year, any new or revised dissertation/major project module that comprises of multiple components equivalent to the word count outlined in the respective model, must be submitted along with clear rationale to the Programme Development & Approval Sub-Committee for approval[1]. Where this is existing practice, modules should be revisited as part of the periodic programme review to ensure justifications are sound for this approach.

Word count limits as stated in the models below would normally include footnotes, endnotes, abstracts, figures and tables. Normally, appendices would not be included in the word count limit unless approved by the faculty's Education Committee. Bibliographies and references should not be included in the word count limit.

Models

Model 1 – Original or Retrospective Research Dissertation

This model applies to those research projects that involve either the collection and analysis of original data, analysis of publicly available electronic datasets, or analysis of an existing dataset from previously undertaken local research. Ethical approval may be required for certain topics.

This model can apply to:

- research undertaken in a laboratory as well as in clinical settings or elsewhere in the field.
- the theoretical analysis of a mathematical problem involving original mathematical investigations and computer experiments such as particle phenomenology and or atomistic simulation.
- the collection and analysis of retrospective clinical material or the theoretical analysis of a mathematical problem following the collection and analysis of data applied to existing mathematical models.

Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally 12,000-15,000

[1] The Programme Development & Approval Sub-Committee will be the approving committee for any new or revised research modules comprising of multiple components during the 2024/25 academic year. This will be reviewed for subsequent years once the Programme Design Committee and the Academic Quality Framework are established.

Model 2 – Information/library-based research dissertation

This model applies to those research projects that are library-based and will involve the review of evidence on a specific topic. This model may include formal systematic reviews or meta-analyses, narrative reviews or literature reviews of other forms. With relevant disciplines, this model may also include the analysis of legal and/or philosophical sources demonstrating advanced skills in legal and/or philosophical analysis. A candidate may be required to include text that describes the method used for the evaluation and/or analysis of the knowledge base.

Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally 12,000-15,000

Model 3 - Creative practice-based research dissertation

This model is only applicable in fields such as music and digital humanities and the main outcome of the research is presented in a practical format. For music, this may take the form of a composition and/or performance material. For digital humanities, the project may be comprised of 'software' (normally conceived as a prototype or model) that expresses a significant part of the intellectual work, (e.g. a database design that models a real-world phenomenon that is being investigated). In either case the candidate should submit in addition a textual component that establishes the research questions that govern the submission as a whole.

Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally 8,000 (textual element)

Model 4 - Artefact construction and analysis dissertation

This model applies to fields such as Informatics, where an artefact is constructed with a view to answering a particular research question. The artefact can take a variety of forms, such as one or more algorithms; a formal mathematical model; representation formalisms to encode data, information or knowledge; software applications; a robot with control software; a design or; a theoretical model or framework; etc. A candidate may be required to provide a demonstration of the artefact and material related to the artefact, such as source code, installation instructions, and user evaluations.

Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally 12,000-15, 000
(Excluding installation instructions and user evaluations)

Model 5 – Professional or Practice based research dissertation

This model applies to research projects that aim to further the professional development of students by offering analysis of practice. This model will enable the application of research to professional situations and would require the candidate to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to professional activities. It may include:

- clinical audit and policy analysis as well as the critical appraisal of service development or healthcare provision.

- the evaluation of the performance of laboratory equipment or comparison of difference analytical techniques.
- the submission of a framework for documentation for clients/service users.
- the critical evaluation of a practice-oriented case study.

Credit value: 45
Max word limit: normally 10,000-12,000
or
Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally 12,000-15 000

Model 6 - Portfolio research dissertation

This model applies to the incremental development and demonstration of knowledge and skills in research design, analysis and reporting, that combines to create a portfolio-based project. Frequently used in online programmes, this model will comprise of multiple modules to provide a set of core research-related knowledge and skills. The portfolio-based research project may include the development of an application for human research ethics approval; formal systematic reviews or meta-analyses, narrative reviews or literature reviews of other forms; the development of a research methodology to examine research objectives and hypotheses; and the analysis of qualitative or quantitative data to meet research objectives or test a null hypothesis. Students may continue a single research topic across multiple modules to build a portfolio.

Credit value: 60
Max word limit: normally the equivalent of 12,000-15,000 across the modules

Model 7 – Professional/Practice modular-based research dissertation

This model applies to professional/ practice oriented programmes which integrate core research skills within taught modules. This is done in order to foster the ability to apply research to professional situations, both practical and theoretical, as well as the ability to use a range of techniques and research methods applicable to professional activities. A minimum of four taught modules will be identified, which develop research knowledge and skills, that are assessed and evidenced in both formative and summative assessments.

Credit value: Integrated in a minimum of four taught modules (equating to 60 credits)
Max Word Limit: the assessments over the taught modules needs to equate to the recommended word limits for the relevant credit values in the TASK framework.

MRes Model 1 – Original or Secondary Data Research Dissertation

This model applies to those research projects that involve either the collection and analysis of original data, analysis of publicly available electronic datasets, or analysis of an existing dataset from previously undertaken local research. Ethical approval may be required for certain topics. This model may include:

- research undertaken in a laboratory as well as in clinical settings or elsewhere in the field.
- the theoretical analysis of a mathematical problem involving original mathematical investigations.

- the collection and analysis of retrospective clinical material or the theoretical analysis of a mathematical problem following the collection and analysis of data applied to existing mathematical models.

Credit value: 75. Max word limit: normally 18, 000
Credit value: 90. Max word limit: normally 25, 000
Credit value: 120. Max word limit: normally 30, 000

MRes Model 2 - Information/Library-based Research Dissertation

This model applies to those research projects that are library-based and will involve the systematic review and/or meta-analysis of a specific topic. This model may also include the analysis of case law demonstrating advanced legal skills or a review of the state of the art in theoretical physics or mathematics. A candidate may be required to include text that describes the method used for the evaluation and/or analysis of the knowledge base.

Credit value: 75. Max word limit: normally 18, 000
Credit value: 90. Max word limit: normally 25, 000
Credit value: 120. Max word limit: normally 30, 000

MRes Model 3 - Laboratory Rotation Dissertation

This model applies to multiple research projects undertaken in different laboratories to acquire contemporary practical and theoretical knowledge and skills in distinct areas of relevance to the field of study, which cumulatively contribute the required proportion of credits to the whole programme. Projects may involve the collection and analysis of original data or review of a specific topic. Ethical approval may be required for certain topics.

Credit value: 45 Max word limit: normally 7,000
It is expected that student complete 2 or 3 such projects

Credit value: 60 Max word limit: normally 12,000
It is expected that students complete 2 such projects

MRes Model 4 - MRes embedded within a MRes-PhD programme

This model applies to multiple research projects undertaken in different laboratories to acquire contemporary practical and theoretical knowledge and skills in distinct areas of relevance to the field of study, which cumulatively contribute the required proportion of credits to the whole programme. Projects will involve the collection and/or analysis of original data. Ethical approval may be required for certain topics.

Credit value: 45 Max word limit: normally 7,000
It is expected that students complete 3 such projects

Associated Templates and Guidance

Appendix 2: Student Handbooks

Faculties/departments are expected to provide students with written information about the dissertation/major project process. This is normally provided to students at the start of the academic year in which they will complete their research. This information is usually supplied in the form of a programme/module handbook but may take an equivalent format. Below are recommendations of what information should be provided:

Overview	• An overview of the structure and purpose of the dissertation/major project • A link to this framework • An outline of how the dissertation/major project topic is chosen/allocated. If there is an internal process of project suitability, students should be made aware of this
Supervision	• An overview of what students can expect from the supervision process, including details about what the supervisor can/cannot help with and an indication of the time commitment provided (for supervisory meetings and what the student can expect feedback on) • A timeline of when supervisors are allocated and the method by which this happens • Clarity around the responsibilities of the student and supervisor (as outlined in this framework) • Information about who students can get in touch with if there are issues with the supervision process/their supervisor
Research Integrity	• Information about ethical clearance requirements and the importance of timely application • A link to the Academic Misconduct Policy and a reminder about academic integrity
Student Support	• Signposting to the Mitigating Circumstances and Interruption of Study policies • Signposting to student support services, such as KCLSU Advice, Disability Support & Inclusion, and the Counselling & Mental Health Support Services • Signposting to Academic Skills support, such as King's Academic Skills for Learning
Formalities	• Information about word count limits and what this includes and does not include. There should be standardisation on this across the programme/department (see Appendix 1 for further information on word count limits) • Information about how to present the dissertation/major project • The submission deadline and how/where to submit • Programmes that require the dissertation/project to be 'signed off' by the supervisor must provide details of this
Marking and Feedback	• The marking criteria for the dissertation/major project • Information about when and how to expect marks and feedback
Student feedback	• An outline of the ways students can provide feedback on the dissertation/major project process and supervisory experience

Appendix 3: Sample Record of Supervision Meetings

It is good practice for both the student and supervisor to keep a record of the supervisory process, including deadlines and action points that have been agreed. This template is a suggestion only and can be adapted as appropriate. It is up to individual supervisors and supervisees to determine what sort of record system will work for them; for example, a supervisor may request that their students email them a record of the meeting summary following each meeting, others may decide to use a shared document with their supervisee. It is recommended that any record is kept in an electronic format.

Supervision Record Form

Date of meeting:

Review of objectives achieved since last meeting and any action points completed since the last meeting:

A brief summary of what was discussed at the meeting:

Agreed action points and/or issues to follow up, including specified deadlines, for both the supervisor and student:

Agreed date of next meeting: