

Programme Specification for Masters by Research (MRes) in Education

This document applies to Academic Year 2024/25 onwards

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|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Awarding institution/body | University of Worcester |
| 2. | Teaching institution | University of Worcester |
| 3. | Programme accredited by | N/A |
| 4. | Final award or awards | PG Cert, MRes |
| 5. | Programme title | MRes in Education |
| 6. | Pathways available | N/A |
| 7. | Mode and/or site of delivery | Primarily, in-person delivery of taught component with some online elements; research component through independent study supported through in-person and/or online supervision |
| 8. | Mode of attendance and duration | Full-time (18 Months); Part-time (36 months) |
| 9. | UCAS Code | N/A |
| 10. | Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement | The programme is informed by Vitae's Researcher Development Framework and the QAA Master's Degree Characteristics |
| 11. | Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision | Approved January 2025 |

12. Educational aims of the programme

The Masters by Research (MRes) in Education is a research degree designed to enable students to complete an in-depth research project on a topic of their choice within the broad field of Education. Whether this topic is teacher education, educational systems, pupil voice, educational leadership and whether the focus is on Early Years education, compulsory education, further or higher education, students will be supported by experts in our Institute of Education to deliver a significant piece of research with the potential to impact on educational practice in their chosen area.

The course is a route into further research - many Masters by Research students progress to undertake a PhD and some from there into academic jobs. However, it also provides students with a contemporary knowledge of issues and challenges in educational theory and practice and a rich portfolio of transferable skills – project planning and management, time management, research and data analysis, digital literacy, and communicating complex ideas orally and in writing – which will be invaluable in a career as a teacher or an educational leader or manager. A MRes qualification is increasingly regarded as way of distinguishing a graduate from others who may hold a BA, BSc or MA and provides an excellent grounding in research techniques that will support current practitioners who want to advance their participation in practitioner research to provide evidence-based teaching in their own context.

To summarise, the main aims of this course are to:

- develop knowledge and expertise in a particular field of study while working alongside nationally and internationally acknowledged subject experts.
- encourage students to think for themselves while developing a critical ability to analyse, interpret and communicate research data and published research.
- develop research methods and skills appropriate to the context and discipline of their research project.
- develop transferrable skills including: independent working; being able to devise, research and execute a substantial research project; set goals, priorities and schedules; document, report and reflect back on progress; data analysis skills such as using electronic and online resources; dissemination skills.

13. Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

These learning outcomes are informed by the descriptor for a Master's degree set out in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (FHEQ), 2008* and by the QAA Master's Degree 'Characteristics Statement' (2020)

| Knowledge and Understanding | | | |
|------------------------------------|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| LO no. | On successful completion of the named award students will be able to: | Module Code/s | Award |
| 1. | critically evaluate current research and advanced scholarship in the field of Education research | RSDP4001; MAED4010 | PGCert |
| 2. | identify research techniques, methods, tools, approaches, or theories appropriate to their own research or practice | MAED4010 | PGCert |
| 3. | understand how research integrity and ethics impacts on their practice as researchers | RSDP4004 | PGCert |
| 4. | apply a comprehensive knowledge and understanding of, and ability to critique, existing theories and debates in Education research towards their own interpretations of existing subject matter and/or the introduction of new material, perspectives, or practice | MRED4005 | MRes |
| 5. | apply techniques, methods, tools, approaches, or theories or philosophies of practice towards completing a substantial research project | MRED4005 | MRes |

| Cognitive and Intellectual skills | | | |
|--|--|-----------------------|--------------|
| LO no. | On successful completion of the named award students will be able to: | Module Code/s | Award |
| 6. | synthesise complex arguments and ideas and communicate those clearly to both specialist and non-specialist audiences | RSDP4001; MAED4010 | PGCert |
| 7. | demonstrate the capacity to adopt a critically-informed reflective and reflexive approach to theoretical models and subject knowledge in Education research and applications of these to their own writing | MRED4005 | MRes |
| 8. | construct in writing, performance or practice comprehensive, informed, current, complex, and intellectually coherent arguments in the field of Media and Culture. | MRED4005 | MRes |

| Skills and capabilities related to employability | | | |
|---|---|----------------------|--------------|
| LO no. | On successful completion of the named award students will be able to: | Module Code/s | Award |
| 9. | demonstrate practical skills in project management including time management, contingency planning, data management | RSDP4004 | PGCert |
| 10. | exercise initiative, personal responsibility, and independent intellectual judgement or practice with regard to complex subject matter. | MRED4005 | MRes |

| Transferable/key skills | | | |
|--------------------------------|--|----------------------|--------------|
| LO no. | On successful completion of the named award students will be able to: | Module Code/s | Award |
| 11. | demonstrate skills in data collection, including digitised or online resources | MAED4010 | PGCert |
| 12. | apply advanced skills in data collection and analysis – including, where appropriate, literature review skills, the use of digital, online or computerised databases, or archive material – towards completing a substantial research project. | MRED4005 | MRes |

Learning, teaching and assessment

In keeping with the nature of an MRes, the course is taught through a combination of classroom-based modules and supervisor-lead independent study. Teaching approaches are therefore wide-ranging, and will include lectures, seminars, and workshops. The emphasis at all times is on interactive learning. This is designed to support students in applying varied course content to their own knowledge and their own coursework.

All modules will be supported by the University of Worcester's Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) Blackboard where students will find lecture slides, assignment instructions, and, in some cases, online micro-courses and other materials. Reading Lists – with links to many of the readings themselves – are available online through Talis Aspire. Feedback and marks are, likewise, made available electronically.

Teaching

The taught programme is delivered through a combination of lectures, interactive workshops, seminars, and online micro-courses. Lectures will introduce students to key topics in Education research. Interactive workshops take a variety of formats and are intended to enable the development and application of learning through discussion and small group activities. Seminars enable the discussion and development of understanding of topics introduced in lectures. Online micro-courses will explore key themes in research planning and management and test knowledge of these themes through short quizzes.

The University places great emphasis on enabling students to develop the independent learning capabilities that will equip students for lifelong learning and future employment, as well as for academic achievement. During the research project module students will work independently for most of the time under the supervision of their Director of Studies. Meetings will take place regularly to guide learning and to provide feedback on work.

Contact time

Our taught modules are delivered in different ways. Some are taught over a number of weeks and some are taught in intensive blocks of 2-3 days. Contact time during this phase of the course will vary week to week but will average around 6-7 hours per week.

During the research phase, the vast majority of study time will be taken up by independent study but will receive 20 hours of supervision from the Director of Studies.

Independent self-study

A Masters by Research requires students to engage in significant independent, self-directed study from the outset. The taught phase will develop skills as an independent researcher which

students will then apply during the research phase. Students will spend this time identifying and reading key literature in their chosen field, planning their project, developing the data collection methodology, collecting and analysing data, preparing and writing taught assessments and ultimately writing the thesis.

Teaching staff

During the taught component students will be taught by a teaching team consisting of staff from both our Doctoral School and our Institute of Education. Staff in our Doctoral School bring their own extensive experience as researchers and of supervising research students to successful completion of their degree. Staff in our Institute of Education, as well as being experts in educational research, also bring experience as practitioners.

Assessment

The course provides opportunities to test understanding and learning informally through the completion of practice or 'formative' assessments.

Each taught module has one or more formal or 'summative' assessments which are graded and count towards the overall module grade. Assessment methods are through coursework including presentations, literature reviews, project proposals, project plans.

For the research project module students will submit a 20,000 word thesis. The Director of Studies will provide feedback on drafts chapters and a final draft of the thesis.

Students will receive feedback on practice assessments and on formal assessments. Feedback is intended to support learning and students are encouraged to discuss it with module tutors and the Director of Studies as appropriate.

Feedback will be provided on formal course work assessments within 20 working days of hand-in.

14. Assessment strategy

In line with the University of Worcester's Assessment Policy, the assessment strategy on the MRes has been designed to help ensure that our students meet the learning outcomes for the course thereby graduating successfully. Assessments have been linked towards facilitating the development of the skills this MRes is designed to foster, whether the academic skills of knowledge and methodological application, the intellectual cognitive skills required for a future academic career (e.g. doctoral study), practice skills or transferrable skills applicable to the workplace (e.g. developing digital literacy, techniques of data collection, or skills in project design, management and execution). While our assessment strategy does seek to offer students a variety of challenges appropriate to Master's level study, each preparing them in a different way for the research project, that variety is also aimed towards fostering the broad and rounded skills that an MRes is designed to develop.

We have designed an assessment strategy in which separate components (the development of subject expertise and theoretical sophistication, project design, literature review, methods, and data collection and analysis) are augmented throughout the modules with an endpoint – successful completion of the MRes – always in mind.

A full outline of assessment methods and weightings, mapped against learning outcomes, grade criteria, and assessment dates will be published in the MRes course handbook with further, specific details included in module guides. In order, further, to meet the developmental aspects of the MRes, the course team are committed to a policy of timely and consistent feedback.

In line with the University of Worcester Assessment Policy, assessments for individual modules are designed, as stated above, to enable students to demonstrate that they have successfully met the learning outcomes for the course. The particular learning outcomes being assessed are specified in each assignment brief. How these combine across the course is mapped via a grid in the course handbook. The programme team for the MRes in Education have developed course specific assessment criteria which are published in the programme handbook. These ensure that assessment on the course is carried out consistently across the modules though criteria are customised for specific assignments as and when this is necessary. These criteria are also closely benchmarked to the University generic grade descriptors.

15. Programme structures and requirements

Award map template for postgraduate awards - PG Certificate and MRes

Course Title: PG Cert in Research Methods

PG Certificate

| Module Code | Module Title | Credits (Number) | Status Mandatory (M) or Optional (O) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| RSDP4001 | Developing as Researcher | 15 | M |
| MAED4101 | Research Methods in Education | 30 | M |
| RSDP4004 | Planning your research | 15 | M |

To be awarded the PG Cert in Research Methods, students must successfully complete 60 credits as set out above.

Course Title: Masters by Research in Education

Masters by Research (MRes)

| Module Code | Module Title | Credits (Number) | Status Mandatory (M) or Optional (O) |
|-------------|-------------------------------|------------------|--|
| RSDP4001 | Developing as Researcher | 15 | M |
| MAED4101 | Research Methods in Education | 30 | M |
| RSDP4004 | Planning your research | 15 | M |
| MRED4005 | Education Research Project | 120 | M |

To be awarded the MRes, students must complete a total of 180 credits at Level 7 including a minimum of 120 credits from the dissertation. A student can only progress to MRED4005 if they have passed 60 credits that comprise the PG Cert.

16. QAA and professional academic standards and quality

There is no QAA benchmarking statement for an MRes in Education. The academic level of the course – embedded in the course content, learning outcomes, and assessment strategy – has been established via the generic Masters level descriptor published in *The Framework for Higher Education Qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland* (FHEQ) and the [QAA Master's Degree Characteristics \(2020\)](#) in Section A of the UK Quality Code for Higher Education.

The QAA 'descriptors' and 'characteristics' inform the model of guided support and structured mentoring that underlies this MRes. They apply as follows:

- through supervision by established national or international experts in the student's field, the course will:
 - provide an in-depth and advance knowledge of the student's research that will be 'at, or informed by, the forefront of an academic or professional discipline' ('FHEQ Descriptors')
 - enable students both to conduct a research project and undertake training in those research methods or approaches pertinent to media and culture. This includes foregrounding contemporary issues e.g. how digital tools can extend humanities research 'methods' and, potentially, enhance the subject's modes of enquiry/practice
 - nurture students to be critical and original thinkers, autonomous, independent learners, and self-reflexive researchers and writers or practitioners
- combined methods of teaching and learning and a diverse assessment strategy. Assessment 'specific to the individual' and that 'requires a dissertation or research project' will be preceded by taught content modules that will include research methods training.
- embedding a clear, potential line of development from undergraduate study to an academic career. This conforms to the description that 'Research master's degrees usually aim to prepare students for the next stage in a research career, whether pursuing a further research programme or entering research-based employment' (QAA 'Masters Characteristics Statement')
- The course is comprised of 180 credits.

This award is located at level 7 of the FHEQ and at Level 7 of the [OfS sector recognised standards](#).

17. Support for students

Students will be supported through the following:

- An Induction programme
- The course handbook and module guides
- Talis Aspire reading and resource lists for each module and support from ILS staff during induction and throughout the course (e.g. via the Information Desk)
- Student Representation on a Staff-Student Liaison Committee
- The University's Doctoral School
- A range of support services, including the University's Doctoral School, Student Services, Library Services
- English language support provision (where necessary) including writing support from the Royal Literary Fund Writers in Residence and, for international and EU students, from the Centre for Academic Skills and English
- The Disability and Dyslexia service offer a range of support and advice for students with particular needs. See <https://www2.worc.ac.uk/disabilityanddyslexia/>
- The electronic learning and teaching interface Blackboard is our primary medium for offering support material. Both the course and individual modules will have a Blackboard page. Here students will be able to access a range of material which may include: module guides, Talis Aspire resource lists; digital copies of academic material; PowerPoint lectures; teaching notes; module information and announcements; skills advice relevant to specific modules; audio-visual material; links to relevant resources available on the internet.

In addition to the above, students on the MRes will be assigned a supervisor at the start of the course. That supervisor will also be the student's personal academic tutor. The supervisor will be

a nationally or internationally acknowledged expert in a field relating to the student's project. Supervisory input on the taught element (RSDP4001 and MAEDD4010) will help ensure that the student has the opportunity to acquire the fundamental Masters level skills described above. The supervisor will provide general advice by undertaking regular progress reviews during the personal development plan and research project stages of the programme. Written records will normally be kept for all meetings. Students will likewise be supported by experts across the university towards acquiring research methods, approaches or theoretical skills and knowledge and practice through the taught modules and through the Doctoral School's Researcher Development programme.

18. Admissions

Admissions policy

Entry requirements

Applicants are normally expected to have:

- (a) a First or Upper Second Class Honours (2:1) Degree, or equivalent award (see [Admissions Policy](#) for other acceptable qualifications), in Education or a related subject, and/or,
- (b) appropriate research or professional experience, which can be verified by evidence of achievement. This includes, for example, research-related experience in Schools, Charities or other Educational Bodies.

International applicants will be required to demonstrate comparable prior subject experience and to have an appropriate level of written and spoken English (normally an IELTS score of 6.5 with a minimum score of 6 in written English). Entry qualifications for international students are guided by the National Academic Recognition Information Centre's (NARIC) advice on international qualifications.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) requirements

It is possible that enhanced disclosure will be required for the research project module; in this case, this will be discussed with and communicated to the student by the Director of Studies prior to starting the module MRED4005.

Recognition of Prior Learning

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning. Please contact the Registry Admissions Office for further information or guidance on 01905 855111.

Further information on Recognition of Prior Learning can be found at <http://www.worcester.ac.uk/registryservices/941.htm>

Admissions procedures

Applicants for the MRes in Education must submit a research proposal as part of their applications. The proposal must identify the following:

- Research area and why you are interested in this area
- Significant prior research in this area
- Research question or aims & objectives
- Proposed research approach/methodology
- Potential ethical issues

The application will initially be assessed by the Course Leader who, subject to the applicant meeting entry requirements, will identify a potential Director of Studies for the proposed

research project and discuss the proposal with them. The applicant may be made an offer at this point or may be invited to interview to discuss the research proposal further.

Admissions/selection criteria

The admission of any individual applicant to the course is judged by the proposed supervisor in conjunction with the course leader who acts as admissions tutor. Those judgements may be supported, as appropriate, by the International Office, Student Services, etc. Where an offer is made, details of the offer and conditions are submitted to Admissions who will process the offer including requirements for a visa.

An offer of a place on the MRes in Education will be made when the following conditions are satisfied:

- The applicant meets the specified entry requirements.
- We have the supervisory capacity and expertise to support the research project outlined in the research proposal.
- The proposal outlined has the potential to become a viable research project at Masters level.

19. Regulation of assessment

The course operates under the University's Taught Courses Regulatory Framework

Requirements to pass modules

- Modules are assessed using a variety of assessment activities which are detailed in the module specifications.
- The minimum pass mark is D- for each module.
- Students are required to submit all items of assessment in order to pass a module, and in some modules, a pass mark in each item of assessment may be required.
- Full details of the assessment requirements for a module, including the assessment criteria, are published in the module outline.

Submission of assessment items

- Students who submit course work late but within 7 days (one week) of the due date will have work marked, but the grade will be capped at D- unless an application for mitigating circumstances is accepted.
- Students who submit work later than 7 days (one week) will not have work marked unless they have submitted a valid claim of mitigating circumstances.
- For full details of submission regulations please see the Taught Courses Regulatory Framework.

Retrieval of failure

- Students are entitled to resit failed assessment items for any module that is awarded a fail grade.
- Reassessment items that are passed are capped at D-.
- If a student is unsuccessful in the reassessment, they have the right to retake the module (or, in some circumstances, take an alternative module); the module grade for a re-taken module is capped at D-.
- A student who fails 60 credits or more after exhausting all reassessment opportunities may be required to withdraw from the University.
- A student will be notified of the reassessment opportunities in the results notification issued via the secure student portal (SOLE). It is the student's responsibility to be aware of and comply with any reassessments.

Requirements for Awards

| Award | Requirement |
|-----------------------------|---|
| PG Cert Research Methods in | Passed a minimum of 60 credits at Level 7, as specified on the award map |
| Masters (MRes) | Passed a minimum of 180 credits at Level 7 including 120 credits for the Research Project module, as specified on the award map |

The PG Cert award is unclassified. The awards of MRes may be made with Pass, Merit or Distinction.

Classification of Masters

The classification will be determined by whichever of the following two methods results in the higher classification.

Method 1

- a) Candidates will be awarded a Distinction where they have attained an average of A- (PD) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.
- b) Candidates will be awarded a Merit where they have attained an average of C+ (PM) or higher from the credit achieved with the University for the award.

Method 2

- a) Candidates will be awarded a Distinction, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade A- (PD) or higher
- b) Candidates will be awarded a Merit, irrespective of their other module results, where they have attained 90 credits at grade C+ (PM) or higher

Candidates will be awarded a Pass where they have not fulfilled the rules for Method 1 or Method 2, but are eligible for the award of a Masters.

For further information on Masters/MRes degree classification, see the [Taught Courses Regulatory Framework](#).

20. Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

A MRes can be a stepping stone to further study at doctoral level. Students who complete a Masters by Research will often go on to undertake a PhD or a professional doctorate such as a Doctorate of Education. This can lead to a role as a lecturer or researcher in the Higher Education sector or as a researcher in the public or business sectors. The transferable skills developed through the MRes will also prepare students for careers in the education, business and public sectors and will fast-track into leadership and management roles.

The 2022 [Vitae](#) publication, *What do researchers do?*, based on Graduate Outcome data, shows the clear benefits of completing a research degree with research degree graduates having significantly better employment outcomes than contemporary graduates with only first or taught masters degrees. The report also highlights that two thirds of research degree graduates go on to work in the HE sector with the remaining third working in other areas such as teaching and management.

Please note: This specification provides a concise summary of the main features of the programme and the learning outcomes that a typical student might reasonably be expected to achieve and demonstrate if s/he takes full advantage of the learning opportunities that are provided. More detailed information on the learning outcomes, content and teaching, learning

and assessment methods of each module can be found in associated course documentation
e.g. course handbooks, module outlines and module specifications,