

## MASTERS RESEARCH DEGREE (MLitt) OVERVIEW

### SCHOOL OF ENGLISH, DRAMA AND FILM

#### What does an MLitt research degree entail?

A research degree is a degree based primarily on a research project, usually proposed and developed by the student, who researches under the guidance of a supervisor and a research studies panel. In the case of the MLitt, or the research masters, the student will complete an independent research project of 40,000- 60,000 words, over the course of 2 years. The primary purpose of masters-level research is to develop the skills and competencies required to conduct research.

#### Registration period

The MLitt degree is a research degree that is normally carried out over 6 trimesters (2 years) full time (or 3 years part time). MLitt students who do not complete the requirements for the degree within these timelines must apply for, and be granted, permission to continue.

#### Supervision & Support

Schools assign each MLitt student:

A **Principal Supervisor**, who has primary responsibility for your academic supervision. There may also be a Co-supervisor, if appropriate, who supports the Principal Supervisor. The main duties and responsibilities of the Principal Supervisor are as follows:

- Act as the main source of research supervision, provide mentoring, guidance and advice for the student throughout their research degree;
- Meet regularly with the student;
- Participate in the Research Studies Panel.

A **Research Studies Panel (RSP)** provides advice, monitors your progress and supports the

Student-Supervisor relationship. The members of the panel are nominated when the student is approved for admission and will comprise of

- the Principal Supervisor,
- any additional Co-Supervisor(s),
- a number of advisers (normally two and no more than four). One of these advisers will be the chair of the panel.

The RSP should normally be assigned to you within the first trimester of your registration and meet at least twice in the first year and at least once a year thereafter. Supervision be agreed in advance of application. The RSP is set up at the time of acceptance.

#### Programme Requirements

By the end of the MLitt, each student **must** successfully complete master's level research, the outcome of which is a submitted thesis in an acceptable form and of a satisfactory standard. MLitt students are not generally required to register for taught modules. However, a principal supervisor may require or recommend that a student applies to register for relevant and appropriate taught modules to support their research.

## **Thesis Examination**

The thesis is examined by an appointed Exam Committee. The Exam Committee for an MLitt is usually composed of an internal and external examiner, with the Internal Examiner acting as the Exam Committee Chair. Research Master's theses are normally examined without a viva voce examination unless determined by the Head of School.

## **Further Requirements**

### Research Ethics

Research ethics applies to all members of the UCD community who conduct research that involves human and/or animal subjects. Prospective researchers must read the policies and guidelines on the research ethics website. [www.ucd.ie/researchethics](http://www.ucd.ie/researchethics)

### Research Integrity

UCD is committed to promoting the performance of research to the highest standards of professionalism and rigour by its staff and students, and to the accuracy and integrity of the research record in publications and elsewhere. To this end, students can choose between an online [Research Integrity Course](#), covering every stage of the research process, highlighting the complex issues that can arise while planning, conducting and reporting your research, or the Research Integrity Module SCI50020 in which online training is accompanied by face-to-face workshops with discussion of specific case studies (this module attracts five ECTS credits, however, it is most suitable for science and engineering research students). research integrity training is a compulsory element of all research degree programmes.

### Research and Professional Development Plan

The student, supported by the Research Studies Panel (RSP), must document their educational, training and personal and professional development needs, which, along with the proposed programme of research, to generate the development of a [Research and Professional Development Plan](#) (RPDP).

## **What is the difference between a taught masters and an MLitt research masters?**

A taught masters in the School of English Drama and Film requires students to take structured taught modules during two trimesters, then complete a shorter thesis of approximately 15-20,000 words over the summer trimester. In contrast, MLitt students identify a focus for their own research interests from the outset, and may supplement this with taught module options if they or their supervisor wishes.

## **How do I know if I am eligible for an MLitt?**

The school takes all elements of the application into account: the application form, the proposal, the student's references and the student's academic record. It is generally recommended that a student would consistently achieve grades of B-/B or above. Applicants for MLitt programmes are required to have completed a BA degree. Applications without evidence of a completed undergraduate degree will be made full offers only on receipt of confirmation of successful completion of such a degree. For applicants whose first language is not English, the requirement is an IELTS score of 8.0 overall, with no component less than 7.5.

## **What are the first steps in the application process?**

The first step is to decide on the focus that is most of interest to you - in what specific area will you find sustained motivation, enjoyment and academic reward for a number of years? Once you have narrowed that down, you draft a research proposal for the research project. Any potential supervisor will need to know what you plan to do, what you know about this area already and where you have found a gap for new knowledge to be generated before they will consider supervision.

Once you have the proposal ready, you contact the academic who you have identified as having similar research interests, and enquire if, based on the proposal, an academic writing sample and your CV, they are interested in supervising the project. Faculty will also expect a potential student to show that they are already at least a little familiar with the academic's work and that the proposed doctoral project falls within their research expertise. Our staff profiles are on our School webpages, available [here](#)

Please do not send numerous emails to numerous faculty. Contact one faculty member at a time, and wait for their response. If they reply that they are not able to supervise, you may then contact the next potential supervisor.

Please be aware that even with a robust proposal and a match of interests, not all faculty will currently have the capacity to take on new students due to current commitments. Thus, in advance of submitting an application, we require that you write and share a proposal with a potential supervisor with the aim of securing their support for your application.

Should you reach the point of having a potential supervisor and decide to proceed with a full application, the application can be made through [UCD applications systems](#).

## **What are the application requirements?**

To apply online, please go to <http://www.ucd.ie/apply/> and follow the instructions given there

The School requires all applicants to complete and submit the following information/documents:

1. A potential primary supervisor who supports your proposal
2. A proposal statement (four to six pages – see proposal guidelines later in this document)
3. A bibliography of the major scholarly publications in the subject you wish to research
4. A proposed schedule for completing your research and thesis within two years (MLitt, full-time) or four years (PhD, full-time)
5. Letters from two academic referees in support of your application. Please ensure you secure these from your referees and upload them by the relevant application deadline.
6. A sample of academic writing (ideally a chapter from a dissertation or research essay)
7. A copy of the official transcripts for academic qualifications.
8. A copy of certificates of any additional qualifications, or evidence of any expertise, which may be advantageous to your studies (e.g. languages, IT skills, professional skills)
9. A copy of a UCD accepted English Language test equivalent to IELTS band 8.0, with no component less than 7.5 (if English is not your first language). The score must be achieved in advance of application submission.

## When are the application closing dates?

We ask that applications be submitted in full to the relevant start date section in the application portal by the following deadlines: by June 1st (September start), by November 1st (January start), or by March 1st (May start).

**Incomplete applications at the time of the application relevant application deadline cannot be reviewed by the admissions panel.**

If your application is accepted, your studies can commence in September, January or May. This is visa dependent for non-EU candidates, and applicants are forewarned that visas are typically taking 2-3 months, thus making an earlier application a wise course of action.

## Proposal Guidelines

Your **proposal** should

- be typed or word-processed, double-spaced, with margins of at least one inch. It should run to not less than four pages and no more than ten in length (not including a detailed research bibliography)
- provide a provisional title for the thesis, explain the central idea, question, or problem you wish to research, and justify the choice of material (texts, writers, period, genre or theories) you intend to study
- give an indication of how this research might be organised into a thesis, outlining how the thesis might be divided into chapters.
- give an indication of how you expect your research to contribute to knowledge on your chosen topic and in wider fields of study.
- explain what methodologies will be used in the course of your research, and also what resources you may need to consult or use.
- provide an intended schedule of the research project

## Tips

1. It may be useful to consult successful PhD / MLitt theses for ideas about how to organise a thesis into chapters.
2. Your **bibliography** should provide a list of the major publications on the topic you wish to research, or in the general area of your research. This should indicate that you have conducted a preliminary survey of existing research and understand how your research might build upon existing research and scholarship.
3. Your **proposed schedule** should outline how you intend to complete your research and thesis within two years (MLitt full-time) or four years (MLitt part-time). This might be divided into years or semesters. You should therefore think about what you would like to achieve in each semester or year of study. This will show that you understand how your research will accumulate into a thesis and will give an indication to your potential supervisor of what kind of work you anticipate will be involved in completing your studies.

### **Do I need to contact the School prior to making an application?**

You should not submit an application without consulting anyone in the School; it is extremely inadvisable to apply without securing the agreement of a potential supervisor.

You should contact and discuss your proposal with the member of academic staff whom you would like to act as your supervisor. Staff research interests are listed on the School webpages, which may also be helpful to you in identifying a potential supervisor.

You should have a proposal conceived and drafted before contacting a potential supervisor. You should seek the advice of your potential supervisor about your ideas, choice of materials, methodologies, or background reading, but the staff member is not expected to comment on, edit, or revise your application proposal. The key purpose of contacting your potential supervisor is to satisfy yourself, as the supervisor must also be satisfied, that you can work with each other toward the completion of your studies. However, the success of this meeting does not guarantee that you will be offered a place, as the School Research Degree Admission Panel must consider your application in relation to a range of other factors.

### **When will I hear the outcome of my application?**

You should allow **6-8 weeks** for the processing of your application following the submission deadline. Please ensure you apply via the correct application links for a January, May or September start.

### **Can I transfer to a PhD from an MLitt?**

MLitt students may be eligible to transfer to a doctoral programme on successful completion of a transfer assessment following a minimum three trimesters and maximum of six trimesters of registration (full-time) or a minimum of six trimesters and maximum of twelve trimesters (part time) on the research master's degree programme. This will be subject to any policy the University may establish.

In instances where an MLitt student wishes to transfer to a doctoral programme, the School will establish a **Transfer Assessment Panel** to assess the progress of the student and their competence and capacity to complete a doctorate. The Transfer Assessment Panel will be convened by the School and will contain at least three academic members, who must have the experience and disciplinary expertise to conduct the assessment; however, it will not include the supervisor(s). The Transfer Assessment Panel will base its judgement on:

- a) supporting documentation from the candidate as determined by the School
- b) review of the student's RPDP from the most recent RSP meeting
- c) a written progress report from the Principal Supervisor; and
- d) an interview
- e) a presentation by the candidate

The transfer panel's recommendation will then be shared with the UCD Graduate Research Board for final decision.

**For any research application queries, please email [graduateedf@ucd.ie](mailto:graduateedf@ucd.ie)**

**Please visit the [School website](#) for details of postgraduate study, [staff directory](#) and research interests, and contact details.**

Useful Links:

[UCD Graduate Studies](#)

[Research Master's in a Nutshell](#)

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