



CITY UNIVERSITY
LONDON

Research degrees typology

City University London offers research degrees at masters and doctoral levels in a variety of forms. Nevertheless each research degree must satisfy the expectations of the [Quality Assurance Agency Framework for Higher Education qualifications](#). Doctorates vary widely, reflecting disciplinary norms, but particular families can be discerned. Describing these should aid the conceptual clarity of future development and may prevent unnecessary proliferation of regulations.

Research degrees offered within the University are arranged into the following three families:

- Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)
- Professional Doctorate (PD)
- Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

The following table summarises the similarities and distinctions between these types of research degrees within the University.

Type	Category of Study	Contribution to knowledge	Material to be examined	Examiners
<p>Doctor of Philosophy (PhD)</p> <p>Normally aspiring doctoral candidates will register as MPhil/PhD candidates and be assessed for transfer to PhD registration according to each School's approved transfer procedures.</p> <p>See QAA qualification descriptors for doctoral degrees for further information.</p>	<p>Major thesis</p>	<p>Varies according to disciplinary norms but always original, substantial and at the forefront of the discipline.</p> <p>Five areas are paramount:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • critical appraisal of previous work; • design and methodology for investigation(s); 	<p>Many candidates will submit a book-like thesis, which will not normally exceed 100 000 words. The format of the thesis, however, is not prescribed and many other forms of communication can be substituted in whole or in part (e.g. performance or published papers).</p>	<p>Examiners should be fully briefed as to the type and specific requirements of the doctorate that they are asked to assess.</p> <p>A panel of examiners (minimum of two) will be appointed, selected to ensure collectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of evaluating 'D' level work; • expertise with respect to the content and format of the material to be examined and its methodological and theoretical position; • expertise in the relevant field of professional practice.
	<p>Structured components</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conduct/execution of research; • analysis of data, evidence or outcomes; • theoretical interpretations. 	<p>Components vary between disciplines but normally a portfolio of 'D' level studies with a commentary linking the studies and setting out the contributions to knowledge and professional practice.</p> <p>The total length of the bound material must not exceed 100 000 words or an appropriately reduced limit where there are compulsory performance elements, e.g. PhD (Professional Practice) - see appendix 1.</p>	
	<p>Prior publication</p>		<p>A portfolio of a substantial body of prior publications (evaluated during the admissions process) and a critical analysis of the work submitted of normally no more than 20 000 words:</p>	

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • placing the work in its overall context; • showing the work's coherence and contemporary relevance; • describing the implications of the work for future research; and • critically evaluating the work's strengths and weaknesses. 	
<p>Professional doctorate (PD)</p> <p>Professional doctorates have examined pre-requisites that must be completed prior to commencing an original research project. The examined pre-requisites can be accredited separately and a suitable diploma awarded.</p>	<p>Professional study</p>	<p>Original research that extends the discipline's knowledge, theory or professional practice.</p> <p>The extent of the original contribution expected will be reduced to balance the substantial pre-requisites but will meet the QAA requirements for doctoral degrees.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • examined pre-requisites;¹ • report of original research and its contribution to extending knowledge in the discipline. The extent of the contribution required and the maximum length of the report will be set for each approved degree to balance the extent of the examined pre-requisites <p>¹ <i>Pre-requisites</i> for assessment of DPsych doctoral thesis include successful completion of core workshops and practice requirements for chartered BPS status. Material examined for consideration of award of DPsych consists of a professional portfolio including elements related to professional practice and supervision, case study reports, research study and a systematic review.</p>	<p>Examiners should be fully briefed as to the type and specific requirements of the doctorate that they are asked to assess.</p> <p>A panel of examiners (minimum of two) will be appointed, selected to ensure collectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of evaluating 'D' level work; • expertise with respect to the content and format of the material to be examined and its methodological and theoretical position; • expertise in the relevant field of professional practice.
Type	Category of	Contribution to knowledge	Material to be examined	Examiners

	Study			
<p>Master of Philosophy (MPhil)</p> <p>The degree of Master of Philosophy typically involve a substantial element of research or equivalent enquiry. See QAA qualification descriptors for masters degrees for further information.</p>	N/A	Original work or a critical exposition of existing knowledge.	Some disciplinary differences but normally a thesis or papers.	<p>Examiners should be fully briefed as to the type and specific requirements of the doctorate that they are asked to assess.</p> <p>A panel of examiners (minimum of two) will be appointed, selected to ensure collectively:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • experience of evaluating 'D' level work; • expertise with respect to the content and format of the material to be examined and its methodological and theoretical position; • expertise in the relevant field of professional practice.

Appendix 1

Example of structured PhD: PhD (Professional Practice)¹

This structured PhD is aimed at mid-career professionals who wish to develop their research expertise through supervised engagement with a series of independent studies, each relevant to their continuing professional practice. Candidates will submit a single bound volume for assessment, containing five practice-focused elements (elaborated below). These ensure development of a spectrum of high-level skills pertinent to practice or service development and professional leadership. Most candidates will choose to explore three closely related questions through their case study, literature review and research. ALL elements of the submission must be at D level.

Commentary

A succinct commentary will explain what is to follow. It offers the opportunity to set out the starting point of the candidate and the rationale for the work undertaken. It will outline linkage between the subsequent elements and draw attention to the current or planned use of the doctoral work within relevant practice contexts. It will place the work in its overall context, describe its contemporary relevance and outline the implications of the work for future research and practice development.

Case Study (approximately 10 000 words)

The case study may concern front-line practice, teaching, supervision, management or consultancy in which the student has been a primary participant. Situational analyses will be accepted as case studies. This element emphasises the skills and knowledge required to be a reflective practitioner.

Critical Review of Literature (approximately 10 000 words)

This differs from the analysis of literature that will be needed to conduct the research project. It is a coherent free-standing enquiry. It should start from the identification of problems or questions pertinent to practice critically evaluate the available literature and make recommendations for practice and research. Candidates should aim for an analysis that, with relatively little modification, would be acceptable for publication. This element emphasises evidence-informed practice.

Research (maximum 50 000 words)

This should comprise an original piece of research, reflecting the same level of quality and originality as a PhD thesis, but less extensive and usually with an applied focus. This does not preclude the development of theory or philosophical argument, provided the relationship to developing practice is discussed.

A dissemination artefact and plan (approximately 7000 words in total)

The *dissemination artefact* will often be a manuscript, ready for submission to a relevant journal, distilling the findings of the Critical Literature Review or the Research Project. The journal should be identified and candidates should ensure compliance with its instructions to authors. Alternative, innovative dissemination artefacts may be submitted (e.g. training materials). The *dissemination plan* will recognise multiple stakeholders within practice and research. It will address the communication of findings in a manner that develops practice.

¹ Formerly DHealth but now available to professionals from within and beyond health care.