

# Master's degree by research

Please note, the information below is specific to degrees at the University of Sydney.

A master's degree by research may be a gateway to study at the PhD level. It is the second-highest qualification on the Australian Qualifications Framework, and includes Master of Philosophy (MPhil). Depending on the course and faculty, the master's degree by research may have a coursework component. Check with your faculty.

## Transfer to PhD

If you are doing a Master of Philosophy (MPhil) or another master's degree by research, the ability to transfer to a PhD during the course varies according to each course and faculty. Each faculty or school sets requisites for a transfer, including that you:

- have met key milestones in your current [progress plan](#)
- demonstrate that your research meets the requirements of a doctorate
- demonstrate your ability to complete the requirements of a doctorate in your remaining period of candidature
- have settled supervisory arrangements, especially a lead supervisor for the PhD

Make your transfer request in Sydney Student and include relevant documentation. The request usually assumes support by your current MPhil supervisor and is determined by the Associate Dean Research Education, in consultation with your postgraduate coordinator.

## Duration

The master's by research degree will generally have a duration of one to two years full time, or up to four years' part-time study. Part-time enrolment is available to domestic students only.

## Probation and progress review

In some faculties, candidates proceed through probation of no more than 4 research periods before being confirmed or transferred to a PhD. All HDR candidates including master's degree by research undergo a progress review approximately every 12 months.

Related articles:

- [Progress reviews](#)
- [Starting your PhD](#)

## Supervision

**From 1 July 2020 all HDR students must have a supervisory team with a minimum of two supervisors**, one of whom will be your lead supervisor and responsible for the overall supervisory experience.

Related articles:

- [Supervision: your rights and responsibilities](#)

## Thesis

The master's thesis must be a supervised thesis and represent a genuine contribution to the subject field. It will normally be between 20 000 – 50 000 words depending on the course resolutions of your faculty. An extension of up to 10 000 words can be given with permission by the dean, associate dean of research education, or chair of the faculty committee. Course resolutions can be found on your faculty website or check with the [Higher Degree by Research Administration Centre](#) (HDRAC). The maximum word length doesn't include appendices.

## Examination

The submission and examination processes for a master's thesis are governed by the same policies as for a PhD.

Related articles:

- [Submit your thesis](#)

## Master of Philosophy (MPhil) as early exit from PhD

PhD candidates may exit earlier with an award of Master of Philosophy if they have met the relevant master's degree by research requirements, as well as any course resolutions; and if approved by the associate dean of research education. Award of an MPhil may also be one outcome of a PhD thesis examination.