

## Defining Masters Level

This section covers..

- [Introduction](#)
- [Expectations of the student](#)
- [Supervision](#)
- [Hours of study](#)

### Introduction

- Master's level can be difficult to conceptualise, and feedback from supervisors and markers will help guide you. Overall the level is defined in the University's literature as "...displaying mastery of a complex and specialised area of knowledge and skills, employing advanced skills to conduct research, or advanced technical and professional activity".
- The University's regulations for the award of a Masters degree state: Qualifications shall be awarded to candidates who:
  - *have demonstrated knowledge and understanding that is founded upon and extends or enhances that typically associated with Bachelor's level, and that may provide a basis for developing and/or applying ideas, possibly within a research context;*
  - *can apply their knowledge and understanding, and problem solving abilities in broader (or multi-disciplinary) environments related to their field of study;*
  - *can communicate their conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously;*
  - *have the learning skills to allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous.*

- A pass mark for an assignment is dependent on several factors, key amongst these is evidence of accessing a wide range of sources, and an ability to analyse and synthesise.

*Analysis* – “involves discovering and explaining the relationship between the parts of the whole under consideration” (Edwards 1998 p160).

*Synthesis* – creating novel ideas by bringing together existing work in a new combination.

See the marking grid for Masters level work in this folder. This will help you appreciate what the markers are looking for.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

### **Expectations of the student**

- Another area which will help define the level of study required is that of expectations of the student. In education up to 'A' level, the student is largely required to learn and repeat what the teacher has taught or asked the student to read.
- In Higher Education, the student is expected to be more active and independent of teachers. University students are said to “read for a degree”: this emphasises the need to read independently and widely at under-graduate level.
- At Masters level, the student is required to be even more independent. The teacher or lecturer should be thought of as a facilitator, to help point you in the right direction only. Reading lists usually only exist as a guide, and there is usually latitude to develop those areas which apply to your speciality or area of interest. It is wide reading of up to date

texts, as well as the primary research undertaken for your dissertation that will make you a 'Master' of your subject area.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## **Supervision**

- Where supervision is available, this will usually take the form of reviewing your ideas and outlines for an assignment in groups or individually. The supervisor role is dealt with in more detail in student handbooks, but the supervisor is there to help with work in progress, and would not be expected to supply the ideas or review finished pieces of work.
- It is very important that you take advantage of the offer of supervision of work in progress. It is all too easy to wander away from an assignment remit or be influenced by people other than the supervisor. Often, even a brief visit to a supervisor can set things straight and motivate the student.

[\(Back to top\)](#)

## **Hours of study**

- Students and prospective students often ask how much study per week is required of them as a means of quantifying 'Masters level'. Unfortunately, there is no easy answer as the amount of study will vary through the programme and each individual will bring differing skills

levels to the course. Nonetheless, you should expect to need to allocate a substantial number of hours per week to the course.

- As a guide –
  1. Consider those who intend to study their course full-time. There is an expectation that they would need a full working week (about 37.5 hours) just to study. They complete the course sooner than a part-time student, but some maths will indicate the potential workload.
  2. When the course was accepted by the University, each module was intended to require a number of hours of 'student effort'. This is several times greater than the amount of 'contact hours' per module. For example – a module of 15 CATS points with 24 hours contact time requires 126 hours of 'student effort'.
  3. The final arbiter is the feedback you get from submitted assignments. Pay careful attention to the markers' comments and seek clarification if you are unsure about anything said. You will also need to complete a Response to Feedback form, which allows you to demonstrate you understand where areas need improvement, or where you can continue to apply good practice.

[\(Back to top\)](#)