PROGRAMME SPECIFICATION
MPhil

This document applies to Academic Year 2018/19 onwards		

1.	**Awarding institution/body**	University of Worcester
2.	**Teaching institution**	University of Worcester
3.	**Programme accredited by**	N/A
4.	**Final award or awards**	MPhil
5.	**Programme title**	Master of Philosophy
6.	**Pathways available**	RDP Pathway 1; RDP Pathway 2
7.	**Mode and/or site of delivery**	One-to-one supervision with taught element for students on RDP Pathway 1
8.	**Mode of attendance**	FT and PT
9.	**UCAS Code**	N/A
10.	**Subject Benchmark statement and/or professional body statement**	The programme is mapped on to Vitae's *Researcher Development Framework* and on to the QAA's Chapter B11 of the Quality Code
11.	**Date of Programme Specification preparation/ revision**	August 2016, August 2017 - AQU amendments, August 2018 – AQU amendments

12 Educational aims of the programme

The programme aims to equip students with the skills to design, research and write a research–based project to the standard expected at MPhil by the University of Worcester.

The MPhil thesis is either a record of original work or of an ordered and critical exposition of existing knowledge and shall provide evidence that the field has been thoroughly surveyed.

13 Intended learning outcomes and learning, teaching and assessment methods

Students completing the programme will have acquired a range of analytical and presentational skills appropriate to a wide range of professional activities and will
be able to:
- frame questions about complex problems and conduct research at a high level to answer those questions
- offer critical appraisal of other research in the field
- gather evidence of different kinds from different sources
- demonstrate understanding and utilise a range of research methods together with their implementation in analysis
- present arguments consistent with such evidence and analysis
  present their research findings effectively in both oral and written form.

14 Assessment Strategy

Researcher Development Programme
All research degree students are expected to engage in a programme of training and development as they progress through their research degree. This programme will provide students with the general and subject-specific knowledge, skills and behaviours to support them in the completion of their research degree. More than this, however, it will contribute to continuing professional development in whatever career they may be planning beyond the research degree.

The Researcher Development Programme (RDP) is organised around 8 thematic "clusters", consisting of modules and workshops delivered by subject specialists from

across the University and the dedicated Researcher Development Team as well as a suite of online courses.

At the beginning of the research degree, students will be allocated to Pathway 1 or Pathway 2 of the programme depending on the student's experience and knowledge as a researcher. This will determine which elements of the programme are core and which are optional. The expectation is that students will engage fully with the core elements but will pick and choose from the optional elements dependent on their own needs.

For the purposes of the RDP, the research degree is divided into three stages:

- Stage One: starting out – normally equivalent to Year 1 full time of the PhD or Years 1-2 part time
- Stage Two: moving forward – normally equivalent to Year 2 full time of the PhD or Years 3-4 part time
- Stage Three: reaching your goal - normally equivalent to Year 3-4 full time of the PhD or Years 5-6 part time

Postgraduate Certificate in Research Methods
The Postgraduate Certificate (PG Cert) in Research Methods is a 60 credit, level 7 award and is mandatory for all students on Pathway 1.
Students on Pathway 2 who wish to take the PG Cert should identify this as soon as possible at the beginning of their studies. Recognition of Prior Learning may be possible for elements of the PG Cert for those on Pathway 2.

Supervision
The student is expected to meet with his/her Director of Studies (DoS) and the rest of the supervisory team on a regular and agreed basis. Supervisors are experts in the field in which the student has selected his/her topic for research. A DoS will provide a wide range of informal advice on strategies for research and exercise the chief influence upon the student's learning.

Monitoring of Progress and Assessment Strategies
The student is required to keep a record of all formal meetings with his/her supervisors, which is submitted after the meeting, for amendment and agreement by the supervisor(s). Copies of this record should be submitted to the Research School.

The student is encouraged to maintain a file of his/her personal/professional development and is provided with various tools to do so.

The student is required to gain approval for his/her research proposal at the beginning of the programme. A project proposal of 2500 words is reviewed by two expert reviewers and refined in response to comments, before being submitted to the University's Research Degrees Board for approval. The Board may approve without significant changes or may request that specified changes be made and the project proposal be considered again in light of these changes.

The student is required to complete an annual monitoring report in conjunction with his/her DoS which outlines progress, provides details of significant changes to the approved project and sets out any training undertaken. The report is reviewed by an Institute Research Degrees Co-ordinator during the annual monitoring interview with the student.

15 Programme structures and requirements

For students on Pathway 1, the programme consists of a taught Postgraduate Certificate, a series of optional workshops plus a written thesis. For students on Pathway 2, the programme consists of a series if core workshops, optional workshops and a written thesis.

<u>Researcher Development Programme</u>

Please refer to the Programme Specifications for RTP401 and RTP402 and the Programme Handbook

<u>Thesis</u>

Below are the minimum and maximum word lengths for a thesis in science, including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:

     a)   MPhil - text based thesis: minimum 15,000 words
                                                    maximum 20,000 words

Below are the minimum and maximum word lengths for a thesis in the humanities, creative arts or social sciences (including business and management studies), including footnotes, but excluding the table of contents, tabulated data, diagrams, any appendices and the bibliography:

     a)   MPhil - text based thesis: minimum 30,000 words
                                                    maximum 40,000 words
     b)   MPhil – practice based thesis   minimum 15,000 words
                                                    maximum 40,000 words

16 QAA and professional academic standards and quality

The programme is designed to meet with the QAA UK Quality Code for Higher Education - Chapter B11: Research degrees

It also meets with the FHEQ qualification descriptors.

It has also been designed in accordance with Vitae's *Researcher Development Framework*.

17 Support for students

Students are provided with:
- An induction programme
- The Handbook for Research Students and Supervisors
- The Programme Handbook for the Researcher Development Programme
- Day to day support through the Research School (RS)
- Research Student Representatives who represent research students at the Research Student Forum, the Research Student Society and on University level committees Research Committee and Research Degree Programmes Committee).
- A range of support services through Firstpoint (including accommodation, fees, finance, registration, ID cards, disability support, international student issues, purchasing a bus pass or car parking permit)
- The electronic learning and teaching interface Blackboard is our primary medium for offering support material. The research degree programme, researcher Development Programme and individual modules have Blackboard pages.
- Library Services supports students and staff and provides books, journals, online resources, IT, print services and study spaces. Students automatically become members of the library on registering, and receive an ID/library card.

18 Admissions

<u>Entry requirements</u>
For MPhil:
- First or Upper Second Class Honours Degree or an approved equivalent award;
or

• The applicant has appropriate research or professional experience which has resulted in appropriate evidence of achievement.

<u>Recognition of Prior Learning.</u>

Students with relevant previous study at postgraduate level or with extensive experience may be considered eligible for recognition of prior learning for elements of the programme.

Admissions policy

Students would normally discuss their research interests and potential research project with potential supervisors prior to submitting an application. This will help establish, for both parties, that staff have the necessary expertise to supervise the proposal and to identify whether the intended research project would require additional, available resources.

All applications are submitted to the Research School and passed to the relevant Research Degree Co-ordinator for initial consideration. In the application form, applicants are required to outline a research proposal for their intended project. Applications are assessed both on the selection criteria below and in terms of: the correlation between the proposed project; the students' prior experience and achievement; and the availability of necessary supervisory expertise. An Admissions Profile for the MPhil is available on the website. Additional selection criteria will be made clear prior to an interview. Where the application has potential, an interview will be scheduled with a panel comprising two members of academic staff (as specified as an indicator of academic quality in *Chapter B11: 'Research Degrees'* of the *UK Quality Code for Higher Education*) one of whom should be the potential supervisor. Completion of an interview checklist will allow for a rigorous and measurable evaluation of the candidate's strengths and their suitability for the programme.

International applications will, initially, be checked by the Research School Manager against NARIC. Copies of all certificates will be required before an unconditional offer can be made to the student. If the application has potential, the interview procedure detailed above will be followed, with the interview conducted (e.g.via Skype if necessary).

Admissions/selection criteria

The admission of any individual applicant to the MPhil programme is judged by the proposed supervisor in conjunction with the Research Degree Co-ordinator who acts as admissions tutor. Those judgements may be supported, as appropriate, by other members of academic staff, the Research School, and the International Office, Student Services. Where an offer is made, details of the offer and conditions are passed back to the Research School where a comprehensive offer letter and contract are produced. For international students, the information and offer conditions are passed to the relevant personnel in Student Services who can also provide the student with additional support and guidance (for example, to obtain a visa, accommodation). All international applicants are checked for their competency in English language by the Language Centre. When it is felt that the applicant does not possess the appropriate level of English language, an in house English language course may be recommended before the student embarks on the MPhil.

An offer of a place on the MPhil will be made when the following conditions are satisfied:
• The applicant meets the specified entry requirements.
• The Institute has the supervisory capacity and expertise to support the research project outlined in the application form.
• The proposal outlined has the potential to become a viable research project both at Masters level (i.e. in accordance with QAA descriptors) and with regard to the context of the subject area and the Institute's existing research expertise and strategic priorities.

19   Methods for evaluating and improving the quality and standards of teaching and learning

Quality and standards are maintained through: the approval process, annual monitoring reports, examiner reports and student evaluation of modules. In addition, the programme is subject to comment and review through the Research Degrees Board, the Research Degrees Programmes Committee and through the Research Student Forum.

20   Regulation of assessment

Students on Pathway 1 are assessed by coursework for taught modules (please refer to the Programme Specification for the PG Certificate in Research Methods for more information) and by thesis and oral examination (*viva voce*). Students on Pathway 2 are assessed by thesis and oral examination (*viva voce*).

Examination Arrangements

The student's Director of Studies must submit details of a proposed Examination Panel which will assess the thesis and examine the student through a *viva voce*. These details must be submitted a minimum of three months in advance of the proposed date of the *viva voce* and considerably earlier for an MPhil involving practice.

The Research Degrees Board will be required to approve the Examination Panel before the Research School co-ordinates the examination according to the procedures notified at the time.

The Examination Panel must be made up of at least two independent examiners, of whom at least one must be an External Examiner.

When the student is a current member of the University's staff academic staff (or has been a member of academic staff in the 12 months prior to the *viva voce* examination), two External Examiners must be appointed. Two external examiners must also be appointed if the student is a member of honorary academic staff, is employed by the Institute as an HPL or is a member of support staff and employed by the Academic Support Unit for the Institute in which they are to be examined. In the case of students previously employed as an HPL, then two external examiners will be required if the appointment has been made in the academic year prior to the one in which the *viva voce* is to be held.

Any External Examiner must be wholly independent of the student, the University, and any collaborating establishment. The same person must not be appointed as an External Examiner so frequently that familiarity with the University might prejudice the giving of independent judgement. In this respect, the same external examiner must not be appointed more regularly than once every two years.

Each examiner must be experienced in research in the general subject area of a particular student's thesis and, where practicable, have experience as a specialist in the topic(s) to be examined.

The collective experience of the examining team for MPhil students should include a minimum of three MPhil or Doctoral students examined, in the UK. Non UK examinations will sometimes be counted. A case will need to be made to the Research Degrees Board.

The external examiner for MPhil is normally expected to have examined at least one MPhil student. The external examiner is also normally expected to have a track record of research degree supervision which they will be asked to demonstrate in the CV supplied to the Research Degrees Board. Examination teams will be approved according to their examination and supervisory experience.

Each examiner must not have acted previously as the student's supervisor or adviser. The Research Degrees Board may in some circumstances approve as Internal or External

Examiner a person who has acted as one of the external experts who reviewed the Approval of the Research Proposal documentation.

Any person appointed as External Examiner must not have been employed by the University during the previous three years.

No person who is registered for a research degree, whether of the University or of any other university or institution of research education, may be appointed to act as an examiner.

Any individual currently appointed as an Emeritus Professor, Honorary Professor, Visiting Professor or Honorary Research Fellow may undertake an internal examining and/or Independent Chairing role under these Regulations subject to approval from the Research Degrees Board.

A student must take no part in the arrangement of the examination and have no formal contact with the Examiner(s) between the time of their being appointed and the holding of the *viva voce* examination, or between that and any subsequent *viva voce* examination in the case of there being a reassessment of the thesis.

Each examiner is required to read and assess the thesis and to submit an independent preliminary report to the University before any *viva voce* or alternative form of examination is held. As part of that assessment, each examiner must consider whether the thesis provisionally satisfies the University's requirements for the degree concerned and, where possible, make an appropriate provisional decision, subject to the outcome of the *viva voce* examination.

Examiners are not permitted to discuss the thesis with the supervisory team between receipt of the examiner's preliminary reports within the University and the commencement of the *viva voce* examination. The Examiners reports will however be shared with the whole examination team once all reports have been received.

Any failure to comply with any of the procedures established by the University for the examination process may lead to a particular assessment being declared null and void and to the appointment of new examiners by the University.

The *Viva Voce*

The appointment of an Independent Chair must be made for all doctoral *viva voce*

The Independent Chair must be wholly independent of the student and will be nominated from the Register of Approved Supervisors.

The Chair is not required to read the thesis or complete a preliminary report form and should be seen as totally independent throughout the process. The Chair does receive the Examiners' preliminary reports prior to the viva and the abstract for the thesis .

Prior to the *viva voce* the Chair is expected to brief the examiners on the University's procedures and facilitate the development of an agenda if requested by the examiners.

During the *viva voce* of the student, the Independent Chair ensures that the examination process takes place in a fair and transparent manner, guides the examiners and student through the *viva voce* and acts as an arbitrator throughout.

Following the *viva voce* of the student, the Independent Chair assists in the completion of documents confirming the outcome of the examination. This includes checking that the amendments highlighted in the Examiners' Report reflect the amendments agreed at the *viva voce*.

A supervisor is allowed, subject to the consent of the student, to attend the *viva voce* as an observer Participation in the discussion, however, is not permitted. The supervisor is required to withdraw prior to the deliberation of the Examination Panel on the outcome of

the *viva voce*. When the student is invited to return, to hear the outcome of the viva, the supervisor is also required to return. The supervisor can, at this point, seek clarification about the specific amendments required.

Outcome of the Examination

The Examination Panel shall only be permitted to recommend to the University the following:
   a)   that the student be awarded the degree for which registered;
   b)   that the student be awarded the degree for which registered, subject to amendments being made to the thesis to the satisfaction of the examiners, the timeframe of which will be decided by the examiners but shall not exceed 6 months;
   c)   that the student be permitted to resubmit for the degree concerned and to be reassessed taking into account the amendments as identified by the examiners, with or without a *viva voce* within 12 months;
   d)   that the student be not awarded the degree and be not permitted to be reassessed.

Following the *viva voce*, the Examination Panel must, when all examiners are in agreement, present a joint report and decision to the University relating to the award of the research degree being sought. The preliminary reports and joint decision of the examiners must together provide enough detailed observation on the scope and quality of the work undertaken to enable the University to be satisfied that the criteria for the award of the research degree have been met.

The reports must be accompanied, where appropriate, by a definitive list of amendments, all of which must have been raised during the viva. On receipt of the amended thesis no further amendments can be suggested by the examiners. On receipt of the amended thesis, the examiners will be asked whether the student has satisfactorily responded to their comments. It is on this basis that the examiner(s) will make the decision on whether or not to agree the award.

On receipt of the report, the student and Director of Studies will be given two weeks in which they can query or seek clarification about any of the amendments listed. A query must be made by the Director of Studies through the Research School, who will contact the examiner(s) on their behalf. No further contact between student/supervisor and examiner is permitted after this time.

When the examiners are not in agreement, they must submit separate reports and recommendations to the University.

When it is decided, on the recommendation of the Examination Panel, that the degree be not awarded and that no reassessment be permitted, the examiners are required to prepare an agreed statement of the deficiencies of the thesis and give the reasons for their decision, to be forwarded to the student by the University. This report will also be shared with the Chair of RDB and Vice Chancellor.

The Independent Chair will, where possible, facilitate a decision of the examiners on the day of the viva. Where a decision cannot be reached, a decision about the award will be passed to the Research Degrees Board, who will make a decision on how to proceed. This may be to accept a majority recommendation provided that majority recommendation has been supported by at least one External Examiner or require the appointment of an additional External Examiner in accordance with the procedures approved for the appointment of examiners.

Minor amendments
Minor amendments should be awarded when the examiners are satisfied that the candidate has in general reached the standard required for the degree, but consider that the candidate's thesis requires additional explanatory information or some minor amendments and corrections not so substantial as to call for the submission of a revised thesis. The candidate should be able to undertake minor amendments with minimal supervision. Minor

amendments that are permissible include typographical errors, minor amendments and/or replacement of, or additions to the text, references or diagrams. Other more extensive corrections may be made, for example, re-writing 1-2 chapters, as long as they do not require significant (as defined by the examiners) re-working or re-interpretation of the intellectual content of the thesis.

Re-assessment

A student must not assume that the supervisors' agreement to the thesis being resubmitted guarantees a successful outcome of the examination or the recommendation for the award of the research degree being sought.

The following forms of reassessment of the thesis shall be permitted:
- a) the thesis shall be permitted to be reassessed after revision without the holding of a second *viva voce*;
- b) the thesis shall be permitted to be reassessed after revision followed by the holding of a second *viva voce*;
- c) a second *viva voce* without the need to revise or resubmit the thesis overview shall be permitted;

After re-assessment, the Examination Panel shall only be permitted to recommend to the University the following:
- a) that the student be awarded the degree for which s/he is registered;
- b) that the student be not awarded the degree and that no further assessment of the work is possible.

21 Indicators of quality and standards

The 2015 national Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) highlighted positively two areas central to the MPhil: the University's provision of research skills; and supervision. 85% of students felt their skills in applying appropriate research methodologies, tools and techniques had been enhanced as a result of the University's researcher development programme. Correspondingly, 84% of respondents agreed that their supervisors have the skills and subject knowledge to support their research.

Close supervision, with the student benefitting from their supervisor's expertise, is central to the MPhil.

Research students studying for a MPhil award are a valued part of the developing research environment at the University of Worcester. They contribute to the research student community and their research typically has both reach and significance of impact in their respective academic disciplines.

22 Graduate destinations, employability and links with employers

The programme is designed to develop core research and transferable skills and to enhance the employability of the student within an academic and research context but also outside of this context.

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.