Assessment Criteria: Research Degrees – Awards of MSc by Research, MRes, MPhil and Doctorate [RDC approval: 20 February 2019]

The following criteria should be evident in the written thesis, and/or during the oral defence of the thesis. The specified assessment domains/characteristics should be regarded as indicative and may be contextualised for specific disciplines.

Assessment Domains/ Characteristics	MSc / MRes	MPhil	Doctorate
Knowledge and Understanding	Integrate knowledge and understanding from the main areas of the subject/discipline/sector to a particular situation including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions.	Integrate knowledge and understanding from the main areas of the subject/discipline/sector to a particular situation including their features, boundaries, terminology and conventions.	Demonstrate critical overview of a subject/discipline/sector including academic insight and understanding of specialised theories, concepts and principles.
	Critically discuss key theories, concepts and principles in the subject/discipline/sector.	Critically discuss key theories, concepts and principles in the subject/discipline/sector.	Demonstrate critical, detailed and often leading knowledge and understanding at the forefront of the subject/discipline/sector.
	Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, concepts and principles.	Demonstrate critical understanding of a range of specialised theories, concepts and principles.	Use knowledge, understanding and insight generated through personal research and make a significant contribution to the development of the subject/discipline/sector.
	Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical knowledge/awareness of current issues in one or more specialisms, informed by developments at the forefront.	Demonstrate extensive, detailed and critical knowledge/awareness of current issues in one or more specialisms, informed by developments at the forefront.	
Practice: Applied Knowledge, Skills and Understanding	Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector at the forefront of, or informed by forefront developments.	Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials associated with the subject/discipline/sector at the forefront of, or informed by forefront developments.	Deploy a significant range of generic and specialised professional skills, techniques, practices and/or materials at the forefront of the subject/discipline/sector and enhance these where appropriate.
	Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.	Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.	Apply appropriate research instruments and techniques of enquiry.
	Plan and execute a significant research investigation or development.	Plan and execute a significant research investigation or development.	Design and execute research of an investigative or developmental nature in order to deal with new problems and issues.
	Demonstrate creativity in the application of knowledge, understanding and/or practice.	Demonstrate some originality and creativity in the application of knowledge understanding and/or practice.	Demonstrate originality and creativity in the development and application of new knowledge, understanding and practices.
	Practice in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.	Practice in a wide and often unpredictable variety of professional level contexts.	Practice to address new problems in novel ways and/or in novel circumstances.

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Generic Cognitive Skills	Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to forefront issues within the subject/discipline/sector.	Apply critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis to forefront issues within the subject/discipline/sector.	Apply an integrated approach to critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas, information and issues.
	Identify conceptualise and define new problems and issues.	Identify conceptualise and define new problems and issues.	Identify, conceptualise and offer novel and creative insights into new, complex ideas and issues.
	Develop creative responses to problems and issues.	Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.	Develop original and creative responses to problems and issues.
	Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline/sector.	Critically review, consolidate and extend knowledge, skills, practices and thinking in a subject/discipline/sector.	Deal with complex and/or new issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.
	Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.	Deal with complex issues and make informed judgements in the absence of complete or consistent data/ information.	
Communication, ICT- and Numeracy Skills	Use an array of routine, advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation, and/or numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.	Use of an array of routine advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation and/or numeracy skills as appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.	Deploy and adapt appropriately an array of routine, advanced and specialised communication, computing, visualisation and/or numeracy skills appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.
	Structure and present the thesis to a standard acceptable to national repositories.	Structure and present the thesis to a standard acceptable to national repositories.	Structure and present the thesis to a standard of published academic work and/or critical dialogue acceptable to national repositories.
	Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.	Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.	Reference work in a consistent manner in accordance with academic integrity and in compliance with a standard referencing system for the subject/discipline/sector.
	Communicate with lay people, peers, senior colleagues and specialists using appropriate methods.	Communicate with lay people, peers, senior colleagues and specialists using appropriate methods.	Communicate to a range of audiences and adapt communications to the context and purpose.
	Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.	Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.	Use a wide range of ICT applications to support and enhance work at this level.
	Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.	Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of data appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.	Undertake critical evaluation of a wide range of date appropriate to the subject/discipline/sector.

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Autonomy, Accountability, and Working with Others	Demonstrate autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.	Demonstrate substantial autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.	Demonstrate substantial authority and exercise a high level of autonomy and initiative in research and/or professional activities.
	Take responsibility for own work and for a range of resources.	Take significant responsibility for own work and/or responsibility for the work of others and for a range of resources.	Take full responsibility for own work and/or a significant proportion of the work of others, and significant responsibility for a range of resources.
	Demonstrate initiative in solving problems and/or new thinking.	Demonstrate leadership and/or initiative in solving problems and/or new thinking, and make an identifiable contribution.	Demonstrate leadership and originality in tackling and solving problems.
	Practice in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and other's roles and responsibilities.	Practice in ways which draw on critical reflection on own and other's roles and responsibilities.	Practice in ways which are reflective, self-critical and based on research/evidence.
	Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements.	Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements.	Manage complex ethical and professional issues and make informed judgements on new or emergent issues not addressed adequately by current professional and/or ethical codes or practices.

Adapted from Scottish Credit and Qualification Framework (SCQF) Level Descriptors 11 and 12 (2012) [https://www.sqa.org.uk/files_ccc/SCQF-LevelDescriptors.pdf].