Programme Specification (Postgraduate)

FOR ENTRY YEAR: 2026/27

Date created: n/a **Last amended:** 04/12/2024 **Version no.1**

1. Programme Title(s):

MRes in Clinical Sciences

2. Awarding body or institution:

University of Leicester

3. a) Mode of study

Part-time

b) Type of study

Campus-based

4. Registration periods:

It is recognised that students usually wish to undertake the MRes in an accelerated manner. For these students the following periods of registration apply:

Normal period of registration is 27 months

Maximum period of registration is 48 months

For some students the MRes will be undertaken in a more standard fashion that complements their clinical training pathways:

Normal period of registration is 35 months

Maximum period of registration is 48 months

Therefore, students will automatically be started on the accelerated pathway. Students who do not submit their dissertation at 27 months will be switched to the standard pathway.

5. Typical entry requirements:

Candidates will normally be Academic Clinical Fellows at the University of Leicester. The MRes may be offered to other clinical research staff at the University's discretion. These candidates will normally have a relevant undergraduate degree (2:1 or higher) or equivalent qualification. Candidates with significant experience and/or qualifications in health or social care research practice or management will also be considered. Where English is not a candidate's first language, applicants will be required to provide evidence of appropriate language skills.

6. Accreditation of Prior Learning:

Accreditation of prior learning will be considered on a case by case basis within an overall requirement that, at the time of application, any prior learning which is more than five years old will not normally be considered current for this purpose. Applications should be made to the course director before commencement of the course.

The maximum accreditation of prior learning is 15 credits (one taught module)

Exemption will be granted on a 'graded' basis.

If a student is admitted to a programme with recognition for prior achievement undertaken at the University, any award previously made to the student on the basis of that prior achievement will be rescinded by the University prior to the commencement of the new period of study.

A formal record will be made of exemptions granted to students when they were admitted and any marks assigned for the purposes of determining progression or the outcome of awards. Students will be notified in writing of all decisions

7. Programme aims:

This programme is only routinely available to Academic Clinical Fellows (ACFs) funded through the NIHR scheme, of which Leicester has approximately 6 per year. The NIHR requires these ACFs to undertake generic postgraduate research training as a condition of the fellowship. This programme aims to deliver high caliber inter-disciplinary integrated training in research methodology focusing on the translation of research findings into therapy or clinical practice. It will enable individuals to acquire the expertise necessary for effective clinical research in the context of their own research and practice roles, responsibilities and interests and to participate and contribute to best practice in clinical research at an appropriate level.

On occasion the MRes may be offered to clinical research staff other than ACFs. This is at the discretion of the University.

8. Reference points used to inform the programme specification:

QAA: The UK Quality Code for Higher Education
University Education Strategy
University Assessment Strategy [log-in required]
University of Leicester Periodic Developmental Review Report
External Examiners' reports (annual)
The ACF Research Training Programme Guidelines
The QAA Masters Degree Characteristics
Senate Regulations

9. Programme Outcomes:

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
(a) Discipline specific knowledge and competencies		
Knowledge		
Recognition of the elements of the research process and applying this to a grant or PhD project proposal.	Lectures, directed reading, departmental seminars (optional).	Course work and module assignments, including dissertation.
Concepts		
Demonstrate how to interpret and apply concepts inherent in areas including research ethics, sampling, bias and confounding, absolute and relative risk, forms of economic evaluation, discounting and sensitivity analysis, literature searching and systematic reviews, linear and logistical regression, clinical trial or qualitative research methodology.	Lectures, directed reading.	Course work and module assignments
Techniques		
Ability to critically review research studies, literature searching, survey and questionnaire design, using SPSS software, testing statistical significance and association between variables, practicing interview, observation and data coding skills, assessing data quality	Computer exercises, worked examples and related feedback.	Feedback from/evaluation of group exercises and all module assignments.
Critical analysis		
Ability to critically appraise research studies and research data of various kinds	Lectures, worked examples, focused reading.	Course work and assignments.
Presentation		
Ability to present in writing individual and group research work; to present data analyses and critical appraisals of a variety of research design/studies.	Coursework exercises and assignment briefings and worked examples.	Group discussions, assignments, poster and dissertation.

Intended Learning Outcomes	Teaching and Learning Methods	How Demonstrated?
Appraisal of evidence		
Ability to draw conclusions from the available literature and to be able to assess the relevance/strength of these conclusions.	Lectures, departmental seminars	Course work & assignments
(b) Transferable skills		
Research skills		
Acquire skills to undertake and critique research methodologies.	Integral to all modules and all teaching methods.	All module assessment methods.
Communication skills		
Acquire report writing, verbal feedback skills, critical appraisal skills, group communication skills, poster presentation skills.	Coursework, presentation of exercise results, dissertation supervision.	Verbal and written course work; dissertation.
Data presentation		
Acquire general data analysis skills. Specific skills in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of research papers and evidence.	Module exercises (oral and written feedback) and assignments e.g. critical appraisal of published data; dissertation supervision.	Variety of on-going coursework. Feedback from exercises; dissertation.
Working relationships		
Ability to work effectively in groups/teams to problem solve, discuss published studies or quality of research data.	All group work undertaken within modules. Working with dissertation supervisor, and research subjects/other researchers.	Module coursework and supervision.
Managing learning		
Analyse complex written and numerical data, searching and selecting information sources, sifting different types of evidence and assessing validity, reliability.	Delivery of subject knowledge: literature searching and systematic reviews; critical appraisal of published research and numerical datasets; dissertation supervision.	Group exercise performance, research project management for dissertation.
Career management		
Appropriate skills to develop effective clinical research careers producing high quality publications & attaining grant income.	All of the above, together with guidance and mentoring from academic and research supervisors & regular reviews	Attainment of grant to undertake higher degree resulting from research module.

10 Special features:

Students will have a clear and personalised academic training plan that articulates with the clinical training plan. A timetable will be agreed with course lead that establishes protected time for research and taught modules (day and/or block release). This timetable will be devised to balance clinical and academic training periods and to meet overall training goals.

Students will usually be Academic Clinical Fellows and as such will be assigned both a Research Supervisor and an Academic Supervisor from the University by the Clinical Academic Training Operational Group. The course lead will be designated as the personal tutor for the purposes of the MRes Clinical Sciences.

10a. Research-inspired Education

Students on this programme will advance through the four quadrants of the University of Leicester Research-inspired Education Framework as follows:

RiE Quadrant	Narrative
	The National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR) requires Academic Clinical fellows (ACFs) to undertake generic postgraduate research training as a condition of the fellowship. This programme aims to deliver high caliber inter-disciplinary integrated training in research methodology focusing on the translation of research findings into therapy or clinical practice. It will enable students to acquire the expertise necessary for effective clinical research in the context of their own research and practice roles, responsibilities and interests and to participate and contribute to best practice in clinical research at an appropriate level.
Research-briefed Bringing staff research content into the curriculum.	Research-briefed – Students are working closely with their research supervisors throughout the course but the dissertation in particular draws on the expertise of the research groups the student is attached to through their supervisors. All staff on the taught modules are engaged in research and bring their experience into their teaching.
Research-based Framed enquiry for exploring existing knowledge.	Research-based – Students conduct a primary piece of research (systematic review) as part of their dissertation and will usually include pilot data generated throughout the course in the funding application to be submitted as part of the dissertation. Sessions on the taught modules are based on real world medical research problems and data.
Research-oriented Students critique published research content and process.	Research-oriented – Students are required to critically appraise research data and analyses in both the taught modules and systematic review part of the dissertation. They are given guidance and training how to critically appraise published research.
Research-apprenticed Experiencing the research process and methods; building new knowledge.	Research-apprenticed – Students undertake pilot research as part of their ACF post. They will be exposed and practise presentations, reading research papers and library skills including using reference manager software. They will work with their project supervisors to develop a research proposal for a competitive funding application during the dissertation module.

As part of studying at a research-intensive university, students on this programme have the following extra or co-curricular opportunities available to them to gain exposure to research culture:

Students being ACFs are normally affiliated to one of the University's research groups and have many extra opportunities to attend group meetings, journal clubs and Departmental seminars. As part of their clinical academic training, they are encouraged to take up positions of responsibility on local University or national academic and management committees as trainee representatives to gain exposure to research culture.

Teaching on this programme will be research-informed (it draws consciously on systematic inquiry into the teaching and learning process itself) in the following way:

The School supports all staff involved in teaching to gain an accredited Higher Education teaching qualification, in which they demonstrate their use of teaching theory to support their own practice and reflect on their current teaching and continuing professional development. Module leads meet as a group that supports teaching activities across the PGT courses of the School of Medicine. Teaching staff undergo regular assessment by peers where they are debriefed about the delivery of teaching and their practice is evaluated.

11 Indications of programme quality:

Evidence of ACFs to pursue and continue their clinical academic career at the end of their ACF period and their ability to compete nationally for funding opportunities.

External examiner reports

Successful applications for funding

Successful publication of systematic reviews

12. Scheme of Assessment

As defined in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study.

13. Progression points

As defined in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study. In cases where a student has failed to meet a requirement to progress he or she will be required to withdraw from the course and a recommendation will be made to the Board of Examiners for an intermediate award where appropriate.

Students will be required to complete the taught modules successfully before progressing to the dissertation.

Upon completion of the written Research Proposal component the complete dissertation comprising work from the Research Proposal and the Systematic Review will be submitted and assessed by the examiners. An oral examination will be conducted by the examiners during which both of the Research Proposal and Systematic Review components of the dissertation will be assessed (viva).

14. Rules relating to re-sits or re-submissions:

As defined in Senate Regulation 6: Regulations governing taught postgraduate programmes of study.

Appendix 1: Programme structure (programme regulations)

MRES IN CLINICAL SCIENCES

October year 1 to end April year 1 (Months 1 to 7)		**Credits**
MD7432	Quantitative Methods in Applied Health Research	15
MD7433	Qualitative Methods in Applied Health Research	15
	Year	**30**

Students will be required to complete the taught modules successfully before progressing to MD7469 (Dissertation).

The dissertation module is comprised of two components, the systematic review and the research proposal (150 credits).

May year 1 to end January year 2 (Months 8 to 16)

Core Module (Dissertation)		**Credits**
		150 credits
MD7469	Dissertation: part A (Systematic Review: 50% of the dissertation)	

Students will be required to complete the written components of the Systematic Review before progressing to the Research Proposal. Completion will be assessed by their research supervisor.

February year 2 to December year 3 (Months 17 to 27)

Core Module (Dissertation)

MD7469	Dissertation: part B (Research proposal: 50% of the dissertation)	
	Total	**180**

Details of programme structure

Between October and April in year 1, students will undertake the following two 15 credit taught modules from the MRes in Applied Health Research:

- Quantitative Methods in Applied Health Research MD7432
- Qualitative Methods in Applied Health Research MD7433

The Systematic Review component of the Dissertation (MD7469) will be undertaken between May of the first year and finish in January of the second year. The module will be supervised by their research supervisor who will provide feedback on the written draft. The final submitted systematic review will be of publishable quality and be similar in structure and format to a Cochrane Review. The review will also include an introduction to the subject area and a reflective commentary on the process of conducting the review.

From February of the second year to December of the final year students will undertake the Research Proposal component of the dissertation module, in which a comprehensive research proposal comprising ***either*** a complete research project proposal and funding application ***or*** a complete research proposal for a PhD fellowship. This will be submitted for University peer review, or review by the student's research supervisor, and the final proposal will be of a standard that

would be competitive if submitted to an appropriate funder and preferably will have been submitted to a funder at the time of assessment. The research proposal must identify the funder and scheme to which it would be submitted and include all essential items for submission. It will be based upon the topic of the literature search conducted for the Systematic Review component of the dissertation and will include the research project proposal, presentation of pilot data, a justification of costs, a statement of potential impact, ethical considerations, justification of any animal work and a lay summary. The research proposal will also include an introduction to the background work performed to inform the funding proposal and a reflective commentary on the process of the generation and revision of the funding application, with particular reference to the changes made in response to an internal peer-review of the application.

The expected structure of the final approximately 12,000 word dissertation will consist of the following (word count guide for each part in brackets):

1) Fundamentals of the subject area (1,000)
   (Dissertation: Systematic Review)
2) Systematic Review (5,000)
   (Dissertation: Systematic Review)
3) Reflective commentary on conduct of systematic review (1,000).
   (Dissertation: Systematic Review)
4) Introduction to Research proposal (1,000)
   (Dissertation: Research Proposal)
5) Research Proposal (word count depending on funder)
   (Dissertation: Research Proposal)
6) Reflective commentary on conduct of the Research Proposal (1,000)
   (Dissertation: Research Proposal)

15. Appendix 2: Module Specifications

See module specification database [log in required]