

## EC9B4 MRes Dissertation Guidelines for Students

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2025/2026

### 1. What is an MRes Dissertation?

The main aim of the MRes dissertation is to give you the opportunity to demonstrate that you have the skills to carry out original research in economics. The purpose is twofold:

- It constitutes proof that you are able to do independent creative work i.e., to write a paper rather than just do problem sets; and
- It is anticipated that students will use this dissertation as a basis for work undertaken during the PhD phase.

Your first task is to choose your dissertation topic. Choosing a topic is difficult and potentially time consuming, so the earlier you get started the better. You may already have decided on the topic you wish to pursue. A number of possible topics might have been suggested by members of staff – for example, in the course of lectures for the MRes field modules. Alternatively, you may identify a research topic through your own independent reading or by attending presentations at research workshops.

When thinking about a topic, attending a seminar or discussing with a colleague, you should ask yourself: does this research address an interesting question; how would I have approached this question; how are they doing it, and do I believe their findings; what is missing and what are they doing wrong; and how could I take this research further or in other directions?

The process of researching and writing the dissertation requires students to choose a topic that is interesting, original, and feasible for PhD research and to prepare a research proposal. Please note that joint work is NOT an option for the MRes dissertation, although it is for one or more chapters of the PhD thesis. Please also be aware that all dissertation submissions (MRes and PhD) are put through Turnitin, to identify any incidences of plagiarism. You cannot submit a paper you have written previously in place of your dissertation, although you can reference a previous piece of work.

### 2. Topic Selection and Supervision Arrangements

Once you have a broad idea of your topic, the next step is to find an appropriate supervisor. You should discuss your research ideas with faculty working in your area of interest and seek the agreement of one of these faculty to act as supervisor for your MRes dissertation.

You should keep in mind that the member of staff who acts as your supervisor at this stage will normally remain your supervisor should you progress to the PhD; but it is also possible for supervision arrangements to be revised, so the matching is not irreversible.

Once you have the agreement of a member of faculty to provide supervision, please complete [the dissertation information form](#) by **12.00 noon on Monday 27<sup>th</sup> April 2026**. Please include the following information:

- (i) a provisional dissertation title;
- (ii) a short description of the topic (up to 100 words); and
- (iii) name of supervisor(s).

*If you are experiencing problems in finding a supervisor, please let the Postgraduate Office know.* The Director of the MRes will then discuss with you, appropriate supervision arrangements for your dissertation. In finalising the allocation of supervisors, we shall try to accommodate students' preferences, but we also need to factor into these calculations, constraints on staff availability.

### 3. In-person Presentation of your Research Proposal

In week 38 you will be required to submit a two-page summary of your research proposal, and give a 10-15 minute presentation on this to the Directors of the MRes/PhD, your supervisor(s), fellow students and interested members of faculty the following day. The submission deadline for your 2-page research proposal summary and the pdf presentation is **12.00 noon on Monday 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2026** in Tabula (Coursework). Your presentation should be in pdf format, maximum 5 slides, excluding the title slide and/or tables/charts in the appendix). You will receive verbal feedback on your proposal and on your presentation, but these elements will not count towards the dissertation module mark, which will be based on the final dissertation and the presentation of this.

### 4. The Dissertation Schedule in the Summer Term

*Supervisors will be available for supervision during the summer term, but please be aware that a number of Faculty have other commitments during the summer vacation period.*

Please note that any change in topic must be agreed with your supervisor. Once you have notified us of your supervisor details, any changes in supervisor arrangements require the approval of the Director of MRes/ PhD (Dr Pablo Beker).

### 5. Format and Submission

The dissertation has a **maximum length of 20,000 words**, NOT including all appendices, endnotes, and tables (note that there is a limit of 15 pages for the appendices, endnotes, and tables). The primary purpose of the word limit is to impose on you a constraint on the scope of the project. If you find it hard to meet the word limit, then this is a sign that you have not focussed narrowly enough. We are more interested in DEPTH than BREADTH.

The **first page** should include the title of the dissertation, your name, date, and abstract (max.150 words) and any preface and acknowledgements. You should acknowledge any substantial help that you received from any source. For example, if you contacted an expert in the field who made a useful suggestion then it would be appropriate to acknowledge this on the front page AND at the position in the text where you exploit that helpful suggestion. Similarly, if you receive programming or data help that has made your task easier then this help should be acknowledged on the front cover and at the relevant point in the text. For example, you should say that the data used was provided by [NAME of PERSON], or that the code that you used in your estimation was written by [NAME of PERSON].

**References** should be collected at the back in alphabetical order and should specify authors, title, journal, volume, year and page numbers. The library provides further guidance on accurate referencing in its Moodle course [Introduction to referencing](#). Guidance is also available on how to avoid plagiarism in the form of a Moodle [Avoiding Plagiarism](#).

**Submission:** You should submit an electronic copy of the dissertation via Tabula, as you have done for coursework during the year. If you have any problems with the submission, please let the Postgraduate Office know ([economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk)). Attach also the relevant "log" (output) files with your submission.

Please note that we reserve the right to see your data and any econometric and other programmes you have used to analyse it. Please keep electronic copies of all of these until the Exam Board has met.

## 6. Deadlines & Extensions

The deadline for submission of your dissertation is **12.00 noon on Thursday 03<sup>rd</sup> September 2026**.

This deadline applies to all MRes students who have passed their field option modules at the first attempt and are not taking any re-sits. There will be another deadline (**04<sup>th</sup> March 2027**) for students who are required to 'sit' or re-sit one or more option modules in September 2025, and for those who may have been granted an extension due to mitigating circumstances.

The **deadline is an absolute one**. Extension to the deadline will only be granted on medical grounds or other mitigating circumstances. The medical note you provide should cover a substantial part of the dissertation period detailing why you were unable to work on the dissertation. Any student who cannot meet the submission deadline will be required to contact the Postgraduate Office ([economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk)), as soon as possible. The Director of MRes has the discretion to approve or decline a request for extension to the deadline. **If an application is approved, the student will be permitted to submit their dissertation at the next biannual deadline (either March or September)**. Short term extensions of a week or two weeks are not possible because of the very tight marking schedule in preparation for the final exam board in September 2026. Suitable medical or other evidence must be supplied by the student within 5 working days of submitting the extension request.

## 7. Formal In-person Presentation of the Dissertation

Following submission of the dissertation, students will be required to present their work to an academic panel in person, made up of the Director of MRes/PhD and their Deputy, the supervisor(s) and other academics working in the relevant research area. MRes and PhD students are also invited to attend these presentations, although they are unable to question the candidates. Presentations will take place on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2026, with exact dates and timings to be confirmed during the summer 2026.

Each student will be allocated 20 minutes for their presentation, followed by 10 minutes for questions. Please make sure that you stick to the 20 minutes allocated. Further guidance and tips on the presentation are available in the [MRes Handbook](#).

## 8. Assessment

The mark awarded for the dissertation will reflect your performance in both the written work and the presentation. The main criteria for the determination of the quality of the dissertation is whether the work presents a promising research agenda and whether you will be able to execute that agenda. At least two examiners will assess your dissertation, employing the criteria described in the appendix to this guidance. No feedback on the result of your dissertation is possible until after the September Exam Board. Your marks will then be released to you via a secure web page. Examiners' comments on the dissertation will also be provided to you after the Exam Board.

Students who fail to achieve a pass mark for the dissertation module (a mark of 50% or higher), will be permitted to re-submit the dissertation at the next submission point, and to re-present their research proposal to the academic panel. The mark for a re-submission will be capped at 50%.

## 9. Ethical Scrutiny

At Warwick, any research proposals, which involve direct contact with participants, through their physical participation in research activities (invasive and non-invasive participation, including surveys or personal data collection conducted by any means), or that indirectly involve participants through their provision of data or tissue, or involve people on behalf of others (e.g., parents on behalf of children), require ethical scrutiny.

Note that your research does not require ethical scrutiny if it does not involve direct or indirect contact with participants. For example, most research involving previously existing datasets where individual-level information is not provided, or where individuals are not identified, or using historical records, does not require ethical scrutiny, and this is likely to include most research conducted in the Department. Research involving laboratory or field experiments, or the collection of new individual level survey data, **always** requires ethical scrutiny.

**It is your responsibility to seek the necessary scrutiny and approval, and if in doubt, you must consult your supervisor.**

If your research work requires ethical scrutiny and approval, checks are conducted within the Department in line with rules approved by the University's Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee. Please consult with your supervisor and complete the Department's form for ethical approval of student research (available here: <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/soc/economics/current/shared/ethics>)

**The form should be emailed to the Postgraduate Office ([economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:economics.pgoffice@warwick.ac.uk)) by Friday 15<sup>th</sup> May 2026.**

#### 10. Key Dates 2025/26

Monday 27 <sup>th</sup> April 2026	Students to inform name of supervisor(s), draft dissertation title and short description of topic via the dissertation information form.
Friday 15 <sup>th</sup> May 2026	Completed ethical approval form (if required) to be sent to the Postgraduate Office.
Monday 22 <sup>nd</sup> June 2026	Submit the research proposal and presentation in Tabula
Tuesday 23 <sup>rd</sup> June 2026	Presentation of research proposal
Thursday 03 <sup>rd</sup> September 2026	Submission of dissertation via tabula.
Monday and Tuesday 14 <sup>th</sup> and 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2026	Presentation of dissertation to academic panel.
Tuesday 22 <sup>nd</sup> September 2026	MRes September Exam Board

V1\_October 2025

## APPENDIX

### Marking Grid for MRes dissertations

#### Background

The points on the scale are based on the department's assessment criteria for postgraduate modules. The dissertation mark is an important part of the criteria for achieving progression to the PhD.

#### The Scale

Dissertations should be marked on a scale from 0 to 100. However, we provide additional guidelines here in recognition of the fact that marks on too fine a scale would not be comparable across students and markers. All markers are required to use the grid and only permitted to mark outside the grid in exceptional circumstances, for which they must provide an explanation to the examination board.

Please note the following:

- The pass mark for MRes modules is 50%. An average mark of 60-69.9% implies a merit and an average mark of 70% or above a distinction.
- Students would automatically progress from the MRes to the PhD if they (minimum): achieve an average of 65% (over all taught modules in year 1 and 2); and demonstrate strong performance in the core modules (i.e., an average of not less than 60 across EC9A1, EC9A2, EC9A3) and achieve a mark of at least 65% in the dissertation.

The permitted points are:

1. **45 (Fail) A failing piece of work.** The student would be offered a resit and the mark for the resit would be capped at 50% (except in mitigating circumstances). A weak attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models or techniques. Demonstrates an inability to reflect critically to address questions and issues. Ideas poorly explained and organised.
2. **55 (Low pass) Work with sufficient merit for award of MRes degree but not for progression to PhD (except in mitigating circumstances).** Satisfactory work demonstrating reasonable knowledge and understanding and a grasp of key economic concepts. Limited critical reflection and limited ability to tackle questions and issues raised. Ideas are adequately explained, although some confusion and lack of organisation.
3. **60 (Minimum merit) Work with sufficient merit for award of MRes degree but not for progression to PhD (except in mitigating circumstances).** A competent piece of work demonstrating a sound grasp of the subject, with some attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models and techniques. Some critical reflection and attempt to tackle questions and issues raised. Work is organised and ideas explained clearly.
4. **65 (Mid merit) Work with sufficient merit for the standards of the MRes degree. Based on the dissertation, the student should be allowed to progress into the PhD programme.** A very good piece of work demonstrating a very good attempt at analysis, synthesis and application of concepts, models and techniques. Some good critical reflection and attempt to tackle questions and issues raised. Work is well organised, and ideas explained clearly.
5. **70 (Minimum distinction) The quality of the dissertation is above the threshold for progression to the PhD. A very good piece of work showing some mastery of the subject and a well-developed ability to analyse, synthesise and apply concepts models and techniques. Good critical reflection and ability to tackle questions and issues raised by the work. Ideas explained clearly and in a well organised manner.**
6. **75 (Distinction) The quality of the dissertation is above the threshold for progression to the PhD.** High quality work demonstrating an excellent command of many key concepts and their applications, with some elements that exceed expectations of students at this level. A good use of

economic analysis (both theoretical and empirical) drawing on some good evidence. Demonstrates a very good ability to critically evaluate and synthesise relevant economic theories and ideas in a manner that demonstrates a capacity for original thought. Excellently structured and presented work.

7. **85 (High distinction) *The quality of the dissertation is excellent, and in line with what we would expect from a top student progressing into the PhD programme.*** High quality work demonstrating an excellent command of many key concepts and their applications, with many elements that exceed expectations of students at this level. An excellent use of economic analysis (both theoretical and empirical) drawing on much good evidence. Demonstrates an excellent ability to critically evaluate and synthesise relevant economic theories and ideas, which shows very good capacity for original thought.

8. **95 (Excellent Pass) *The quality of the dissertation is outstanding and in line with what we would expect from the very best student progressing into the PhD programme.*** Exceptional work of the highest quality, demonstrating excellent knowledge and understanding, analysis, relevance, presentation and appropriate skills. Work, which is close to publishable standard, demonstrating an excellent capacity for original thought. This mark is exceptional and should only be awarded if the idea is very novel, the agenda very promising and/or progress on the data is impressive for this stage in the career of the student. Excellent structure and very well presented, excellent use of academic writing techniques.