Master’s awards

• no nationally agreed definitions of types.
• awards with similar titles can vary in nature both between institutions and across disciplines.
• reflects the independent and autonomous nature of UK higher education institutions.
• reflects diversity of traditions that exists within different disciplines.
• must meet the criteria for recognition as a ‘Second Cycle’ award under the Bologna process
Taught master’s awards

- Master of Arts (MA)
- Master of Laws (LLM)
- Master of Education (MEd)
- Master of Science (MSc)
- Master of Dental Science (MDentSci)
- Master of Public Health (MPH)
- Master of Medical Science (MMedSc)
- Master of Music (MMus)
- Master of Business Administration (MBA)
- Master of Science (Engineering) (MSc (Eng))
- Master of Psychotherapy (MPsychother)
- Master of Research (MRes)
- Master of Health Science (MHSc)
- Master of Psychoanalytic Observational Studies (MPsychObs)
- Master of Child Forensic Studies (MCFS)
- Master of Midwifery (MMid)
- Master of Business Studies (MBS)
- Master of Fine Art (MFA)
Taught master’s awards - integrated

The Integrated Degrees of Master and Bachelor

- Master of Engineering and Bachelor of Engineering (MEng, BEng)
- Master of Mathematics and Bachelor of Science (MMath, BSc)
- Master of Physics and Bachelor of Science (MPhys, BSc)
- Master of Chemistry and Bachelor of Science (MChem, BSc)
- Master of Geology and Bachelor of Science (MGeol, BSc)
- Master of Geophysics and Bachelor of Science (MGeophys, BSc)
- Master of Geography and Bachelor of Science (MGeog, BSc)
- Master of Natural Sciences and Bachelor of Science (MNatSc, BSc)
- Master of Environment and Bachelor of Arts (MEnv, BA)
- Master of Environment and Bachelor of Science (MEnv, BSc)
- Master of Geosciences and Bachelor of Science (MGeosci, BSc)
- Master of Design and Bachelor of Design (MDes, BDes)
- Master of Biology and Bachelor of Science (MBiol, BSc)
Research master’s awards

Research
• Master of Philosophy (MPhil)

Master’s degrees by research:
• Master of Arts (MA (by research))
• Master of Education (MEd (by research))
• Master of Science (MSc (by research))
• Master of Science (Engineering) (MSc (Eng) (by research))
• Master of Dental Surgery (MDS)

The Integrated Degrees of Doctor of Philosophy and Master
• MA,PhD;
• LLM,PhD
Volume of learning and credit

Guidance on minimum credit requirements set out in the QAA’s *Higher education credit framework for England: guidance on higher education credit arrangements in England*

• master's degree will have a typical minimum of 180 credits of which at least 150 will be at master's level.
• for integrated master's, a credit allocation of 480 with at least 120 at master's level is given.
• no credit values are given for ‘research’ degrees, e.g. MPhil, but taught components of research master's degrees may attract credit.
• an MPhil delivered primarily in 'taught‘ mode will have a typical minimum credit value of 360, of which 240 will be at master's level.
Level of study

- All master’s degrees are expected to meet the generic statement of outcomes set out in the qualification descriptor within *The framework for higher education qualifications in England, Wales and Northern Ireland (August 2008)* (FHEQ) or *The framework for qualifications of higher education institutions in Scotland (January 2001)*. The qualification descriptor sets out broad expected outcomes for a master's degree in terms of what graduates should be able to demonstrate and the wider abilities that they would be expected to have developed.
Typically awarded to students who have demonstrated:

• a systematic understanding of knowledge, and a critical awareness of current problems and/or new insights, much of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of their academic discipline, field of study or area of professional practice.

• a comprehensive understanding of techniques applicable to their own research or advanced scholarship.

• originality in the application of knowledge, together with a practical understanding of how established techniques of research and enquiry are used to create and interpret knowledge in the discipline.

• conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  – to evaluate critically current research and advanced scholarship in the discipline.
  – to evaluate methodologies and develop critiques of them and, where appropriate, to propose new hypotheses.
Typically, holders of the qualification will be able to:

• deal with complex issues both systematically and creatively, make sound judgements in the absence of complete data, and communicate their conclusions clearly to specialist and non-specialist audiences

• demonstrate self-direction and originality in tackling and solving problems, and act autonomously in planning and implementing tasks at a professional or equivalent level

• continue to advance their knowledge and understanding and to develop new skills to a high level.
and holders will have:

- the qualities and transferable skills necessary for employment requiring:
  - the exercise of initiative and personal responsibility
  - decision making in complex and unpredictable situations
  - the independent learning ability required for continuing professional development.
Broad characteristics

- Often described as either 'taught' or 'research' depending on the relative proportion of structured learning and independent study.
- A third broad 'professional' or 'practice' category, the predominant mode of delivery is through work-based or practice-related learning.
- QAA has proposed a ‘reference point’ setting down the expected characteristics of the different types of master’s award.
Research masters

Examples: MPhil, MA (by research), MDS

Characteristics
• 1 or 2 years full time study.
• normally involves a research project undertaken by independent study.
• may be a small taught element, e.g., research methods modules.
• assessment specific to the individual, e.g., a viva involving defence of a thesis or discussion of an artefact, performance or musical composition.
• taught component, where present, is usually separately assessed.

Purposes
• to prepare students for the next stage in their careers, whether pursuing further research or entering employment.
• to enable a contribution towards research in the discipline.
Specialised/advanced study masters

Examples: MSc, MA, MRes, MPH

Characteristics
• predominantly ‘taught’.
• frequently involves a substantial research project leading to a dissertation or the production of other output such as an artefact, performance or musical composition.
• typically 1 year full time study.
• includes MRes, <50% taught.
• normally unclassified, although it may be possible to be awarded a merit, distinction or other grade.

purposes
• to prepare students for the next stage in their careers, whether that is further academic or professional study, or entering employment
Professional/practice masters

**Examples:** MBA, MEd, MBchB, MCFS, MMid, MPychobs, LLM

**Characteristics**
- learning is structured – predominantly ‘taught’.
- may be developed in collaboration with the relevant PSRB.
- may include practical elements, e.g. fieldwork, placements or work-based learning
- typically 1 or 2 years full time duration.
- may be a prerequisite for registration or entry to a profession.
- often accompanied by PGCert and PGDip to facilitate CPD at different stages of a professional career.

**Purposes**
- to enable entry into a profession regulated by a PSRB.
- to provide CPD opportunities related to particular professions or employment.
Integrated masters and bachelors

Examples: MEng, MChem, MMath, MGeol

Characteristics
• master's level study is integrated with study at the level of a bachelor's with honours degree within a single programme which may lead to two awards (MEng, BEng; MGeog, BSc).
• progression to the final year of the programme is dependent on achievement and often requires higher grades than the bachelor's degree.
• learning is structured – predominantly ‘taught’.
• may be developed in collaboration with the relevant PSRB.
• may include practical elements, e.g. fieldwork, placements or WBL.
• typically 4 or 5 years full time duration.

Purposes
• to enable entry into a profession regulated by a PSRB.
• to extend the depth of study in a relatively closely-defined discipline.
Integrated doctorate and masters

Example: MA, PhD; LLM, PhD; ‘New route’ PhD

Characteristics
• masters level study is integrated within the first two years of a doctoral degree.
• Students graduate with both PhD and masters at the end of a single 4-year programme of study.
• Often funded (and highly competitive) via a DTC.

Purposes
• provides a learning environment in which to broaden and deepen subject knowledge and professional skills while providing the opportunity for interdisciplinary study to extend expertise.
• to enable entry into a profession regulated by a PSRB.
• “intended to equip PhD students with the skills they need to pursue successful careers as leaders in universities, companies, government or the public services”.
Postgraduate Certificate and Diploma

• located at the same academic level as masters degrees in national qualification frameworks.

• have some outcomes that correspond to those of the qualification descriptor for a masters degree, but

• may not meet the full range of outcomes for a master's degree on account of a lower overall volume of learning (and credit) associated with the award.

• often used as part of professional and continuing professional development.
Questions:

• would we benefit through adopting a typology of master’s awards, perhaps based on the QAA’s reference point?
• should we establish expectations in terms of the balance of credits in the different types, and between (say) MA and MSc?
• should we consider developing different sets of learning outcomes for each type?
• Can we make better use of the PGCert and PGDip?