



## **Guidelines for candidates, supervisors and examiners on the 'PhD by Publication' format**

### **Background**

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The format of PhD by publication is now available in most Irish Universities and has been an option across a number of European countries for many years. DCU's Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis provide for submission in the format of published work with accompanying chapters. Candidates considering submitting in this format should consult the regulations in addition to this document.

There are potential advantages to choosing to submit in this format. They include the wider dissemination of research results, fostering a habit of publishing among doctoral candidates and access to external feedback during the doctoral project (through the review process). This must be balanced against the advantages of a monograph which more readily supports the development of a sustained argument, with inclusion of a synthesis of the relevant literature and an integrated discussion of the methodology. It is worth bearing in mind that the PhD by publication format does not suit all research projects, or discipline areas, and students must consider the potential duration of peer review and publication processes when choosing to submit in this particular format.

Submission of the thesis in this format must be discussed at an early stage with the supervisory panel. The candidate and panel must all agree with this approach. The supervisory panel may decide that it is not appropriate to submit the thesis in this format.

### **The Standard of a PhD**

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It is important to understand that, irrespective of what format is chosen for the submission of research leading to a PhD award, the standard by which the work is evaluated remains the same. Examiners will consider the coherence of the work in its entirety, the appropriateness of methodologies used, the rigour of analysis, the quality of presentation, the significance of the contribution to new knowledge, the coherence of the body of work, and the quality of the candidate's defence of the thesis at viva voce.

While the collection of publications constitutes the main body of the thesis, and is thus immensely important, candidates must be aware that the examiners' judgement of the entirety of the thesis is the sole determinant of the outcome. Even with a collection of publications in high quality journals, the thesis overall may be deemed to fall short of the required standard. The introductory and concluding chapters which accompany the published papers play a very important role in ensuring that examiners are convinced that the work presented as a whole meets the standard of PhD, especially with regard to articulating the coherence of the work, when all publications and accompanying chapters are considered, along with the role the candidate played in collaborative work, and their level of contribution to co-authored work

specifically.

## **Decision to submit 'by publication'**

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The decision to opt for this format should be made jointly by the candidate and the supervisor(s) at an early stage in the doctoral process (ideally in Year 1). It is important that supervisors provide explicit guidance, based on their own publication experience, with regard to the potential duration of the peer review and publication processes as well as the disciplinary ranking of the publication outlets to be selected. Normally, this means targeting highly ranked journals within the disciplinary field, or, in the case of some disciplines, peer reviewed, highly ranked conference publications and/or chapters in top publishing outlets. Doctoral candidates may not have a good understanding of the publication landscape and process and may be unduly delayed in submitting for the award if they are unaware of the expectations and constraints.

The intention to submit in Publication format ought to be made no later than the transfer/confirmation stage for those on PhD Track and the latter must occur according to the timelines stipulated in the DCU Academic Regulations for Postgraduate Degrees by Research and Thesis. For those on full PhD registration from the outset, this indication ought to be provided in Year 1 but ideally no later than between month 18 and 21 (full-time, or equivalent period for part-time registration).

The transfer/confirmation stage provides an opportunity for the PhD Track student to report specifically on the current status of publications, outline future plans for publications they feel are needed and to provide a summary of what the overview will contain. At the transfer/confirmation stage it is expected that at least one publication would be submitted to a high-ranking publication outlet for the discipline, if not already accepted for publication. Furthermore, the student should present a concrete and realistic timeline for submission and revision of all other publications and for the writing of the accompanying chapters. Examiners should, as part of the transfer/confirmation examination, assess how realistic a PhD by Publication is at this stage. If there is significant doubt about the timeline, the candidate and supervisor should discuss a plan for PhD by Monograph instead and should plan appropriately. At least one publication manuscript (in draft or in published format) should be presented as part of the transfer/confirmation examination, along with a detailed summary of the PhD topic and methodology.

For candidates who register directly on the PhD Register and for whom a Transfer/Confirmation exam is not required, similar recommendations to those outlined above also apply.

## **Publications: Criteria**

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### **Number**

The number of publications included as part of the thesis submission will vary by discipline, however, a minimum of three papers is required. Additional papers to the three baseline papers with smaller or more specific contributions can be included where this makes sense in terms of overall coherence. The criteria candidates and their supervisors should use in judging whether the number of papers is sufficient are the same as the criteria applied to all PhD submissions and relate to the substance of the contribution to new knowledge made by the candidate, as well as the reputation of the publication outlet.

## **Type**

As mentioned above, PhD by Publication means targeting highly ranked journals within the disciplinary field, or, in the case of some disciplines, peer reviewed, highly ranked conference publications and/or chapters in top publishing outlets. The peer review process for each publication should be demonstrably rigorous. The outlet should be recognised as a highly ranked one within the discipline. Guidance on the quality of each publication outlet should be provided by the supervisory panel who will normally have more experience in publication compared with the candidate. Discussion on which outlets to target, as well as timeline and contingency plans should be had at the outset.

## **Time period**

Publications which can be included are limited, without exception, to those which are based on work undertaken during the student's period of registration.

## **Uniqueness**

While a small amount of overlap is accepted, repetition between papers should be minimal, and each paper must be distinct and contribute uniquely to the overall thesis. Novel contributions are expected in each publication.

Doctoral students may be working on related topics in an overarching project or research challenge and may collaborate on and co-author papers. However, for the award of PhD by Publication, it is advised that a "one candidate-one paper" principle be applied. This means that if two (or more) candidates work on different aspects of the same paper, that paper should only be included in the set of papers submitted for examination by one of the candidates. Where it is intended that multiple doctoral candidates collaborate on and co-author a paper, it is the responsibility of the supervisors to discuss and agree in advance which paper will be submitted by which candidate.

## **Contribution/Authorship**

The doctoral candidate must be the sole, main, or significant contributor to each of the three publications being considered. This implies that the candidate was actively involved in conceptualization of the research problem, literature review, methodology, data collection and data analysis for all three papers, as would be the case for a PhD by Monograph. The doctoral candidate should assume the lead for methodology, data collection and analysis at least. Collaboration and co-authorship are allowed. Disciplinary differences exist, but it is advisable that the collaborative effort by the doctoral candidate in each of the three main publications is at least 50% of the overall effort. The contribution by the candidate should be clearly and comprehensively stated in the Declaration of Authorship form (see Appendix A). The supervisory team need to ensure that the contribution to publications by the doctoral candidate is sufficient to warrant award of a PhD, when compared with the effort required for a PhD by monograph.

## **Coherence**

The rationale for selecting the papers and the inter-relationship between papers should be made clear in the accompanying chapters. Excluded publications are those which essentially report the same data or findings to separate readerships, or publications that have no or only tangential link with a coherent PhD topic.

### **Definition of “Accepted”**

Publications are defined as having been “accepted for publication” on the basis that written confirmation from an editor has been received of acceptance of the paper in its final form. Only peer-reviewed published book chapters or peer-reviewed papers in reputable journals or other peer-reviewed reputable publications for the discipline(s) in question can be included. It is the candidate’s responsibility to provide evidence of the standing and peer reviewed status of a publication, which can be done in the Declaration of Authorship form. However, it should be understood that the depth of examination of work during peer review may vary depending on journal title, audience, conference standing, or book series etc. A paper having been peer reviewed does not diminish the examiners’ rights to judge the overall contribution as falling short of what is required to merit the award of PhD.

### **Overall**

While the PhD by Publication is acknowledged as a different format, it should be comparable in terms of effort, novelty, coherence and contribution to a PhD by Monograph.

### **Declaration of Authorship**

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In the case of papers involving multiple authors, each named author must be declared by means of the Declaration of Authorship form. This form states and validates the nature and extent of the candidate’s contribution to individual papers and should preface each co-authored ‘paper’ chapter. The extent of the candidate’s contribution to the work must be clear and significant and the expectation is that the candidate will be the paper’s lead author and key contributor. However, it is accepted that disciplinary differences will apply in this regard.

The candidate’s declaration of authorship of his/her contribution to the work should be verified in all cases by the principal supervisor. In some cases, it may be appropriate for this verification to be given by both the principal supervisor and the lead/corresponding author of the work, where this is not the candidate or the supervisor. Candidates are advised to refer to the DCU Code of Practice on Authorship for further information<sup>1</sup>.

The Declaration of Authorship form should be bound with the other submitted materials at the examination submission stage. The form should be completed and should precede each publication in the examination copy. The forms should then form part of the Appendices in the final hardbound version of the thesis.

### **Presentation of the Publications within the Thesis**

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All published work should appear in manuscript/thesis format, rather than as formatted for the publication outlet, and full citation details for the work, including a URL link to the journal, DOI, and ISSN number, where available, should be provided<sup>2</sup>. There does not have to be an exact correspondence between the published and thesis versions, though generally it is expected that the only variations will be minor formatting ones. There should otherwise be no difference in content between the version included in the thesis and the published version. Post-viva corrections to the summary chapters will be carried out as normal. Recommended revisions to the papers following the viva voce should be included in Appendices in the final thesis so

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<sup>1</sup> [https://www.dcu.ie/system/files/finance\\_editor/2022-03/144\\_code\\_of\\_research\\_practice\\_v2.1.pdf](https://www.dcu.ie/system/files/finance_editor/2022-03/144_code_of_research_practice_v2.1.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> The inclusion of final format (normally PDF) copies of the published work in an Appendix to the thesis is problematic due to varying views on copyright issues across different publishers.

that the published papers and the versions in the thesis remain identical.

In line with university policy, PhD theses submitted in 'by publication' format will be made available on the DCU DORAS electronic repository, subject to the same procedures as monographs. It is important that any issues relating to Intellectual Property and Copyright are resolved prior to submission of the thesis, just as for monograph-format submissions. Confirmation of copyright permission(s) should be included in the appendix to the thesis. Candidates submitting for PhD by publication are required to ensure the prior agreement of the journal editor or publishers to the deposit of the published material in the DCU Institutional Repository DORAS<sup>3</sup>. Candidates should not submit to publication outlets that will impose an embargo on published and/or pre-publication versions of articles.

## **Structure of the PhD by Publication Thesis**

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A PhD by publication follows the structure of a conventional PhD (monograph) in that it begins with an 'Introduction' chapter and closes with a 'Conclusions' chapter, with each paper presented as a separate chapter in between. The work may also include, where necessary, an integrative discussion chapter and conventional thesis chapters which present elements of the research project not covered by the papers. The 'non-paper' chapters play a key role in presenting the thesis as a unified body of work and should range between 15,000 and 20,000 words (papers excluded). These chapters should evaluate the contribution the research makes to the advancement of knowledge in the research area and provide a reflective and evaluative commentary which focuses on the broader significance and coherence of the published works.

Note the following:

The critical introduction to the work should set the papers in the context of existing literature, provide an explanation of the scope and objectives of the work and the chosen methodology, and include a detailed overview of the theme(s) common to all papers included in the thesis.

Each paper/chapter should be prefaced by linking/connecting text which situates the paper within the thesis and maintains the thesis narrative. Published papers should be included in manuscript format and paginated in sequence with the rest of the thesis<sup>4</sup>. Papers do not have to appear in chronological order but should appear in cogent sequence.

The conclusion should be integrative in nature, drawing on the research project as a whole. It should provide a critical synthesis of the overall contribution of the work to the research area, the contribution to knowledge, the novelty, and emphasize the coherence of the publications provided in this regard. A full set of references is required.

The maximum word-count for the thesis in its entirety is 90,000 words (including papers and references, not including appendices).

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<sup>3</sup> Publishers may be reluctant to allow PDFs of the final versions of papers etc on DORAS. However, they may allow pre-publication versions. The latter depends on publishers, so candidates should seek prior approval from the editor or publisher as appropriate. The following text may be useful, and should be modified to suit the specific context: 'I am contacting you to enquire whether you permit articles published in [insert journal name] to be uploaded to DORAS, the non-commercial, open access Institutional Repository at Dublin City University, Ireland (<http://doras.dcu.ie>). I would like to submit an article which, if published, would be included in my PhD thesis, and publication in DORAS is required in order to conform to DCU regulations concerning publication of thesis content.'

<sup>4</sup> PDF proofs of published paper should not be incorporated into the body of the thesis.

## External Examiners

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These guidelines and the relevant extract from the regulations should be provided to potential external examiners at the first stage of (normally informal) contact, so that they can evaluate whether they are comfortable with undertaking the task of examination of a thesis in this format. External examiners are asked to consider the following *guiding* questions when examining a PhD by Publication. They should also refer to the PGR6 Form, in which they report formally on the work and the viva voce.

- Does the body of work submitted as a whole make a significant and coherent contribution to knowledge, at the level expected internationally for a PhD award?
- Is the quality of the work in keeping with international expectations for the award of a PhD?
- Is the candidate's contribution and effort, as set out in the authorship declaration form, equal to what is normally expected for the award of a PhD?
- Are the publications submitted for consideration accepted/published in high ranking, peer-reviewed outlets for the discipline?
- Do the accompanying chapters adequately argue for the coherence of the topic, the interrelationship of the papers, the overall contribution to the field?

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