

Theses containing publications



Publishing is the essence of science, and learning to publish is an important component of learning to conduct scientific research.

In offering the option to include publications in a thesis, the University hopes to encourage research candidates to publish throughout their candidature. The publication process allows candidates to engage with the broader scientific community and validates and confirms the candidate's work along the way. The ability to accept critical comment and disseminate findings within the constraints of publications is a valuable skill that takes time to develop and will prove valuable throughout the candidate's future career in research.

In recognition of this the University has introduced the provision where theses containing published work may be submitted for examination. It is important to note that a collection of disparate publications, no matter what their quality, would NOT be appropriate for the award of the degree. On the contrary, the expectation is that the candidature was planned and supervised in a responsible manner as an integrated project, and that the publications presented in the thesis constitute elements of a connected whole, as they would as chapters in a thesis prior to publication.

That being the case, the key questions that examiners will then need to address are:

- whether the thesis is a substantially original contribution to the knowledge of the subject concerned
- for publications where there are multiple authors, whether the quality and extent of the student's contribution merits the award of the degree

The purpose of this paper is to provide guidance on the practical issues of submitting in this way.

The University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999 (as amended) provides that:

“85. (2) A candidate may submit in support of the candidature any publication of which the candidate is the sole or joint author. In such a case the candidate must provide evidence to identify satisfactorily the sections of the work for which the candidate is responsible.”

For the purposes of Part 10, Division 4, 85(2) of the *University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999* (as amended), a candidate may include in a thesis (whether in the body, or in one or more appendices) one or more published works of which the candidate is the sole or joint author.

Acknowledgement of others

(a) *Co-authors*

The Academic Board will accept a signed written statement from all authors of a work attesting to the contribution of the candidate as evidence to satisfactorily identify the sections of the work for which the candidate is responsible.

Where papers have multiple authorship, the candidate would normally be the first or principal author and have written permission of the co-authors. Each jointly authored paper incorporated in the thesis must include a clear statement on the contribution

made by each author. The statements must be sufficiently detailed to describe accurately the contribution of each author; must be signed by each author; and must be incorporated in either the body of the thesis, or in one or more of its appendices.

(b) ***Proof readers or editors of theses***

When a thesis has had the benefit of editorial advice then the name of the editor and a brief description of the service rendered should be printed as part of the list of acknowledgements or other prefatory matter near the front of the work when it is to be presented for examination.

If the professional editor's current or former area of academic specialization is similar to that of the candidate, this too should be stated in the prefatory matter.

Format of the thesis

(a) ***Abstract***

The abstract should summarise the main findings presented in each paper and should indicate how the included works, when considered together, demonstrate a significant contribution to knowledge of the subject concerned. It should, in chronological order, list the publications being presented for examination.

(b) ***Introductory chapter***

The introductory chapter should contain succinct statements describing the research problem investigated, overall objectives and specific aims of the study and an account of research progress linking the scientific papers. The account of research progress must link together the various papers submitted as part of the thesis providing continuity for the whole thesis so that the reader can understand the logic behind the progression of the research program. The candidate needs to critically place any published works used in the body of the thesis in the context of the appropriate field of study and in the context of the thesis as a whole.

(c) ***Literature review***

The literature review should, out of necessity, replicate literature cited in subsequent chapters but should contain a clear statement on the significance of the thesis aims, a critical review of relevant literature, identification of knowledge gaps and the relationship of the literature to the experimental program.

(d) ***Discussion***

The thesis must contain an overarching discussion of the main features of the thesis including, *inter alia*, the principal significance of the findings, problems encountered and future directions of the work. The discussion should not include a detailed reworking of the discussions from individual papers within the thesis.

Examination process

All theses must be presented for examination. The successful publication of articles will not render the work exempt from examination. Because the publications are examined as part of a larger work it is possible for reviewers of individual papers to be invited to act as examiners. Due to the potential for conflict of interest, co-authors would not normally be considered suitable as thesis examiners.

Examiners will be advised on the University's position regarding the inclusion of one or more published works in the body of the thesis, or as one or more appendices, and examiners who express concern regarding a candidate's mastery of the subject matter will be encouraged to recommend an additional oral examination to satisfy any concerns where they deem it necessary.

Related policies

1) Search by keyword for related University legislation, resolutions, policies and procedures
<http://www.usyd.edu.au/policy/>:

- (a) PhD: Submission of Doctor of Philosophy Theses Containing Published Work
- (b) University of Sydney (Amendment Act) Rule 1999 (as amended):
- (c) Resolutions of the Academic Board relating to the degree of Doctor of Philosophy:
- (d) University of Sydney (Intellectual Property) Rule 2002:
- (e) University of Sydney Code of Conduct for Responsible Research Practice and Guidelines for Dealing with Allegations of Research Misconduct at
- (f) Proof-reading and editing of theses and dissertations

FAQs

Do these rules only apply to PhD candidates?

No. Masters by research candidates are permitted to submit in this way too.

Can I include unpublished work as well as published work?

Yes. The thesis may be based on published and unpublished work. Where unpublished work is included, it should be presented as a “traditional” chapter, rather than a published paper, unless it is in press, awaiting publication

Can I include papers that are not directly related to the thesis?

A collation of unrelated papers would not constitute a thesis by publication. Papers not contributing to the main thrust of the thesis would at best be suitable for inclusion in an appendix or could be listed following the under the heading 'Additional Publications by the Candidate Relevant to the Thesis but not Forming Part of it'.

Can I include papers that have been rejected?

Manuscripts which have been rejected by a journal must not be included unless they have been substantially rewritten to address referees' comments.

Can I include papers that I authored before I was a candidate for the degree?

A candidate may only include a published work if the research and publication of the work occurred during the course of candidature for the degree.

How many papers do I need to include to submit in this way?

There is no minimum requirement. The thesis can contain any number of papers; however a thesis presented purely by publications should probably include at least three papers. Of equal, or perhaps more importance than quantity, is quality of the journals.

How should the papers be incorporated in the thesis?

Papers can be incorporated in the thesis in any or all of the following ways:

- Passages from published papers can be quoted verbatim (or in appropriately edited form and referenced) into one or more chapters of the thesis.
- A published paper or an accepted manuscript can form a single chapter (or several papers may form successive chapters) without any editing.
- An original reprint of the paper(s) can be directly bound into the thesis or inserted as a photocopy (where paper size of the reprint differs from that of the thesis).

Why are the introduction and conclusion chapters so important?

The introduction and conclusion chapters need not be overly long but will be very important in ensuring that the individual publications that make up the thesis can be viewed by the examiners as a cohesive unified whole. If the publications do not have a clear cohesion, then the thesis may attract criticism and be rejected by examiners.

What if the introduction and conclusion chapters are not published?

The introduction, conclusion and bridging sections between publications do not have to be publications in their own right. In addition, for a candidature where considerable effort was expended in developing and validating research methods, it may be appropriate to have a methods chapter, that would give the candidate an opportunity to describe this in more detail (ie to a much greater extent than would normally be allowed in a peer reviewed journal article). The ability to critically evaluate research methods is an important component of a research candidature, and so the opportunity should be taken, where appropriate, to demonstrate mastery of this to the examiners.

Why publish at all?

- Experience in publication writing is valuable to candidates seeking to make the transition to postdoctoral positions.
- Publications would normally form part of a CV that a candidate would submit to potential employers.
- If you have reviewers' comments on your papers before submitting your thesis, you can use this feedback to improve your thesis. This will not only improve the quality of your thesis but also your confidence. By the time you submit the thesis for examination, at least part of it will have been subjected to the scrutiny of other experts in the field
- In the event of disagreement between examiners, the thesis will be easier to defend if it has already been subjected to a peer reviewed process as it will already be established as worthy of publication, which is one of the criteria for thesis examination. The larger the proportion that is published, the easier it is for your examiners and the Board of Postgraduate Studies to recognise that your work is substantial and valuable.
- It resolves the conflict between preparing the thesis for examination and preparing papers for publication. You won't feel that when you are spending time on your papers you are running out of time to prepare your thesis.

Is there anything that should not be included?

Typically, the submission should not include review articles (except where the article take the place of a literature review and has been peer reviewed), newspaper articles, articles in non-refereed professional journals, work that had already been submitted successfully or unsuccessfully for the award of a degree at any university, or works where the applicant's role was that of editor.

Is there a sample statement of authentication I can adopt?

Statement of Authentication

This thesis is submitted to the University of Sydney in fulfilment of the requirement is for the Degree of Master of...../Doctor of Philosophy.

The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material, either in full or in part, for a degree at this or any other institution.

Signature:..... Date:

Are there any pitfalls of submitting in this way?

The decision to submit a thesis in the form of a series of published or unpublished articles should be given careful consideration. In particular, candidates should note that submitting a series of papers is not a universally accepted practice. Moreover, it is likely, especially with published articles along one theme, that there will be considerable repetition across the work which may detract from the presentation of the thesis. For these reasons, candidates may wish to consider modifying the electronic versions of papers so that the thesis reads as a more coherent whole.