

Submission of a Research Paper PhD Thesis: Guidance

1. Introduction

- 1.1 All postgraduate research awards at the University of Southampton are governed by the [Regulations for Research Degrees and Higher Doctorates](#) (referred to from here on as “the Regulations”) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision](#) (referred to from here on as “the Code”). The guidance contained here supplements the information from these sources, but the Regulations and the Code must be consulted where clarification is required.
- 1.2 This guidance refers to submission of a thesis for examination for the award of Doctor of Philosophy with the use of journal-style articles (hereafter known as ‘research papers’) written during doctoral candidature where:
 - 1.2.1 the student has produced a body of interconnected published (or publishable) work based on research performed during their candidature at the University of Southampton and which, where published, has been written during that candidature; and
 - 1.2.2 the student intends for the work to be presented in a format that pertains to a series of published (or publishable) research papers; and
 - 1.2.3 the research papers constitute the majority of the substantive work both in terms of the research and the text.

Beyond the submission of research papers, a student wishing to submit for a PhD in the above format will be required to submit additional introductory and concluding chapters which, when combined, form a coherent thesis. The *Requirements for Submission* section of this Guidance sets out the expectations for a submission made in the above format.

- 1.3 The main body of the thesis must consist of substantive core chapters in the form of research papers which contain distinct, but related, outputs. The submission shall consist of enough papers to be broadly comparable to a PhD thesis (that is, it is evidently the result of sustained work normally in a single field to which it makes an original contribution), and to meet the criteria for the award of a PhD as set out in paragraph 5 of the University’s Code of Practice for Research Degree Candidature and Supervision (The Difference between PhD and MPhil – The PhD). The number of papers will vary between disciplines but it is expected that most submissions will include between three and seven papers.
- 1.4 The research papers must be substantial, self-contained, and published (or publishable) in reputable peer-reviewed journals or books.
- 1.5 Outwith the requirement to include introductory and concluding chapters in this format, it is not possible to submit a thesis that contains a combination of chapters in the form of research papers with a standard PhD thesis format.
- 1.6 This guidance does not apply to members of staff in candidature for the award of Doctor of Philosophy. Members of staff who wish to submit for a PhD by published work as an alternative to the standard PhD route should consult the [Regulations for Members of Staff in Candidature for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy](#).

2. Required Permissions

- 2.1 A Faculty Graduate School may decide that it is not appropriate to permit the submission of a PhD thesis containing chapters in the form of research papers for some or all of their disciplines.

Students should therefore note that there is no automatic right to submit for a PhD in the above format and that some disciplines may routinely refuse such permission.

- 2.1.1 At the discretion of the Faculty Director of the Graduate School, a student may be granted permission to submit a PhD thesis which contains chapters in the form of research papers. Permission may be refused should the Faculty consider a submission in this format to be inappropriate. In circumstances where they deem this appropriate, the Faculty Director of the Graduate School may choose to delegate the approval process to a nominee. The nominee must be a member of the Faculty Graduate School directorate. Where this is done, the Faculty Director of the Graduate School is responsible for ensuring that appropriate training and support is in place for the nominee and that there is a clear and transparent process within the Faculty to ensure that decisions are applied consistently across all programmes.
- 2.2 A student who wishes to submit a PhD thesis containing chapters in the form of research papers should engage in discussions with their supervisory team early in their candidature, preferably well in advance of their First Progression Review.
- 2.3 The student should engage in detailed discussions with the Assessment Panel at the Second Progression Review (Confirmation of doctoral candidature). A record of the discussion should be made in the Panel's report and, if appropriate, should include a formal recommendation that the student be permitted to submit a PhD thesis containing chapters in the form of research papers.
- 2.4 Should the Faculty Director of the Graduate School (or their nominee) permit the student to make a research paper thesis submission, they are required to confirm this to the Faculty Graduate School Office. The Faculty Graduate School Office will then formally notify the student that permission has been granted and will record this on the student's file.
- 2.5 Subject to permission having been granted, the decision to submit their thesis in the above format must be the student's own. No undue pressure should be placed upon a student to submit a thesis containing chapters in the form of research papers and they may subsequently choose to make their PhD submission in a standard thesis format at any point prior to their notifying the University of their intention to submit. The student will be asked to confirm the thesis format when completing the intention to submit process.

3. Requirements for Submission

3.1 Authorship Statement

- 3.1.1 Where there is joint authorship, the student must be a principal author of the research papers. At an early stage, the student must agree an appropriate order of authorship with their supervisors and other co-authors.
- 3.1.2 Jointly authored work must be identified as such. For each such jointly authored work, the student must provide a statement at the start of the thesis that clearly states the contribution of each author, along with the full list of authors of each paper. The statement should also include publication details, where relevant.

3.2 Introductory Chapter(s)

3.2.1 The introductory chapter(s) must:

- demonstrate that the research papers form a coherent body of work;
- demonstrate that the research papers represent a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or an area of professional practice;
- outline the methodological approach of the research; and

3.2.2 The introductory chapter(s) should have an approximate word count of between 10,000 and 20,000 words. Schools may wish to provide additional written guidance on the content of the introductory material to reflect practice within different academic disciplines.

3.3 Concluding Chapter(s)

3.3.1 Notwithstanding the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, the concluding chapter(s) must:

- explain how the papers collectively demonstrate an original contribution to knowledge in the student's subject, field or profession;
- critically examine the strengths and weaknesses of the papers;
- make recommendations, e.g. for future research or professional practice, as appropriate to the discipline.

3.3.2 The concluding chapter(s) should have an approximate word count of between 5,000 and 15,000 words. Schools may wish to provide additional written guidance on the content of the conclusion to reflect practice within different academic disciplines.

3.4 The presentation of the submission must adhere to that which is outlined in [Producing your thesis – a guide for research students](#) in the format, length and sequence of material (including a single list of references and/or bibliography only), with all appendices located at the end of the thesis.

4. Examination and Award

4.1 The Faculty Graduate School Office will notify the examiners of any research paper thesis submission and will provide them with a copy of this guidance document.

4.2 The *viva voce* examination will be conducted in accordance with the expectations as set out in the [Code](#). Students should note that they will be expected to defend the thesis in full and should be prepared to answer questions on any element of any of the research papers, not just those solely authored by themselves.

4.3 Collectively, the submission must be judged by the examiners to demonstrate the capacity to meet the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, as set out in the [Code](#).

4.4 Following the *viva voce*, the examiners will recommend one of the courses of action as specified in the [Regulations](#). The examiners will be permitted to require amendment to the content of any element of the thesis, including to any the research papers contained therein. However, students should note that any such amendments will be required to the thesis submission only and the student will not be required to replicate such amendments in research papers already published.

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