

The Three-Paper Format in Submission of a PhD: Guidance

Submission format for a PhD Thesis: the use of papers published during candidature

1. These guidance notes refer to the use of papers written while studying for a PhD where a candidate has:
 - Produced a large body of published or publishable work during their candidature, AND,
 - Wishes to present the work in a format of a series of published or publishable papers (referred to as a 'Three-Paper PhD'), AND
 - Where these papers constitute the majority of the substantive work in the thesis, both in terms of the research and the text

2. **A School may permit a candidate to submit a thesis in the above format, providing that the following requirements are met:**
 - The thesis must consist of a minimum of three substantive core papers containing distinct research contributions. However, if appropriate to the subject discipline, Schools may stipulate a higher minimum (but not a lower minimum).
 - The thesis must also include a substantial introduction that:
 - Demonstrates the papers form a coherent body of work;
 - Demonstrates that the 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;
 - AND in the case of multiple authors, establishes the candidate's contribution to the published papers.

Typically, this section of the thesis should be around 15,000 words but does not count as a substantive contribution in its own right. It should set the work in context and may for example contain a literature review, and an outline of the methodology employed, but Schools may wish to provide additional written guidance on the content of the introduction to reflect practice within different academic disciplines.

- The papers are substantial, self-contained, and published or publishable in reputable peer reviewed journals. Collectively the thesis must demonstrate the capacity to meet the requirements of Paragraph 5 of the [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#).
- Where there is joint authorship, the candidate must be a principal author of the papers and interpreted in the candidate's own words.
- Jointly authored work must be identified as such. The candidate must state clearly their personal share in the investigation. The supervisor must certify this statement at the front of the thesis.
- The layout of the thesis must adhere to that outlined in the document [Producing your thesis – a guide for research students](#), both 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.)
- The research work must be performed, and the papers written, during the period of PhD candidature

3. All University regulations governing candidature for the PhD will also apply.
4. The thesis examiners will ultimately determine whether a thesis is acceptable and meets the required University academic standards and format. Arrangements for the examination and the examination itself will take place in accordance with paragraphs 90 to 104 of the [Code of Practice for Research Candidature and Supervision](#).
5. Submission for an MPhil is not permitted in this format, but it should be noted that this does not remove the option from the examiners of awarding an MPhil if a thesis presented in the three-paper format is not deemed to be sufficient to award a PhD.
6. For members of staff at the University, please note that there are separate University regulations covering submission by published work under staff candidature which is not covered by the above.

Document Information	
Author	PGR Regs/CoP Review Working Group, April 2014
Owner (committee)	Academic Quality and Standards Committee
Approved Date	14 May 2014 (subject to revisions), 4 June 2014 (revisions approved by Chair's action), May 2017 (revisions approved), October 2018
Last Revision	October 2018
Type of Document	Guidance