



**VICTORIA  
UNIVERSITY**

# **GUIDELINES FOR EXAMINERS – THESIS WITH PUBLICATION**

Graduate Research School

## 1. Introduction

These guidelines are designed to assist examiners in understanding the University's requirements for a **Doctor of Philosophy** thesis presented in the *Thesis with Publication* format.

## 2. Background

The Doctor of Philosophy with Publication has been adopted in Australia and internationally as an alternative format for presentation of a coherent program of research. In this model, normally the research and writing are undertaken during enrolled candidature with the format supporting the production of timely high-quality published/publishable material as part of the overall thesis development process.

With the current expectations about publication output in relation to employability following graduation, this format was considered by the University to be attractive and beneficial both to candidates. In fact, for suitably qualified candidates in some disciplines with project structure and timelines that make the format feasible, it was considered that the *Thesis with Publication* could prepare candidates for research careers as it enhances opportunities for learning to write in a manner needed for their ongoing career development and enhances their professional 'capital', including their capacity to compete for research funding and postdoctoral positions post-graduation.

## 3. VU's Approach to '*Thesis with Publication*'

VU's approach to *Thesis with Publication* is essentially an alternative style of documenting the research and presenting it for doctoral examination. The *Thesis with Publication* format is nominated at the time of candidature approval. Alternatively, it may be that scholarly papers/manuscripts have been written and accepted for publication in the course of the candidature to date and it is considered by the supervisor/s and candidate that it would be advantageous for the thesis submission to be able to directly incorporate these by changing from the standard to the *Thesis with Publication* format. The *Thesis with Publication* adopted at VU does not preclude the option of the incorporation of previously published material if this is approved through the VU Advanced Candidature Approval process.

#### **4. Standards and Expectations for the Doctor of Philosophy Degree and Doctor of Philosophy with Publication Format**

The Doctor of Philosophy degree provides training and education in research under supervision with the objective of producing researchers capable of conducting research independently, at a high level of originality and quality. A doctoral candidate is expected to uncover or create new knowledge by the discovery of new information, formulation of theories, development of new approaches, or the innovative re-interpretation of existing ideas, theories or approaches.

A Doctor of Philosophy Thesis is expected to equate to a sustained piece of written work of 50,000-80,000 words in length. The typical word length of a thesis will be influenced by the discipline of the candidate's research therefore if the word limit is below or beyond the amount specified for the degree at the time of submission, the relevant Associate Director, Research Institute (or nominee) will determine if the thesis can be placed under examination. If required, the Associate Director, Research Institute (or nominee) will consult with the candidate's Principal Supervisor.

The University expectations regarding the length of time taken to complete a Doctor of Philosophy is between 3.5 - 4 years<sup>4</sup> years EFT.

A Doctor of Philosophy degree requires the candidate to demonstrate learning outcomes at Level 10 in the Australian Qualifications Framework. It is awarded after independent external examiners are satisfied that the student has demonstrated:

- A deep and thorough understanding of the relevant techniques in the field of research;
- Competence in the chosen field through judicious selection and application of methods to yield a significant body of work;
- Capacity to critically evaluate and effectively present this body of work;
- Independence of thought and approach;
- Has made an original contribution to knowledge.

Regardless of the discipline and the nominated presentation format, the research undertaken and the depth of knowledge demonstrated in the thesis must satisfy the requirements outlined above.

The expectations of the rigour, depth and quality of the research and its associated new contribution to knowledge in a *Doctor of Philosophy with Publication* are identical to those expected in other formats. For example, a Doctor of Philosophy candidate who is planning to work within the format with the support from his/her supervisors will follow essentially the same process as any other candidate in terms of planning, conducting and preparing their research for examination with the same key milestones, such as:

- An initial pre-candidature period where a detailed research proposal is developed;
- Candidature approval, including approval of the detailed research proposal and plan to adopt a *Thesis with Publication* format;
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting of progress against the planned project timelines and doctoral level performance goals and standards.

Importantly, planning/staging of a project to be presented as a *Thesis with Publication* needs to be amenable to segmentation into discrete components/studies that can be developed and submitted as publications along the way.

## 5. Papers Suitable for Inclusion in a *Thesis with Publication* Format

VU permits the presentation of a Doctor of Philosophy Thesis with Publication which includes:

- a. Scholarly publications and/or
- b. Manuscripts accepted for scholarly publication after peer review.

The scholarly publications may be in the form of a journal article, monograph, book chapter, conference paper, or other format relevant to the candidate's discipline. Scholarly publications included in the thesis must represent original research, have been subject to academic peer review and have been published within 10 years before the date of the submission of the thesis for examination.

Manuscripts (as compared to publications) representing original research must include evidence that they have been accepted for scholarly publication.

It is expected that the scholarly publications and the targeted outlets for the manuscripts accepted for publication are of high quality. This may be demonstrated via Scopus quartile rankings or, for example, via discipline-specific rankings or the scholarly reputations of the editors or publishers. Examiners are reminded, however, that it is the academic standard of the overall thesis which is examined. Thus, it is critical that the scholarly publications and/or manuscripts must be linked and framed to produce a coherent and cogent thesis.

The initiation, key ideas, development and writing up of each of the scholarly publications and/or manuscripts accepted for scholarly publication, within the thesis must be the primary responsibility of the candidate. When any paper has multiple authors, the candidate must be the principal author of the work. Prospective authors can refer to the Universities Australia, NHMRC and the ARC's [Guide to Authorship](#), for clarity on the conditions of authorship. This must be supported by written verification from the [co-authors](#), including their permission to incorporate the paper in the thesis submission. The research upon which the thesis and publications/manuscripts are based must not have been undertaken for another degree.

At the time of thesis submission, at least 50 per cent of the outputs included in the thesis must be scholarly publications or manuscripts accepted for scholarly publication after peer review.

The number of papers and/or manuscripts will vary for each candidate, and will depend on the proportion of the overall thesis that is presented as scholarly publications and/or accepted manuscripts.

## 6. Thesis Format

A *Thesis with publication* must include additional framing and linking material as part of the thesis submission to:

- Contextualise the research problem;
- Justify the theoretical framework;
- Comprehensively review the relevant literature (especially that not covered in depth within the scholarly publications and manuscripts);
- Account in detail for the research design, including linking of the scholarly publications and/or submitted manuscripts to the broader research problem and approach; and
- Draw conclusions, in relation to the overarching research problem or theme, about its contribution to knowledge, its limitations and practical significance.

Some of the elements included in the thesis presentation are likely to take a different form when presented in a *Thesis with publication* format. For example, the Abstract needs to summarise the main findings presented in each of the published scholarly papers or manuscripts. It should indicate how the included works are tied to a coherent intellectual framework, and how, when considered together, they demonstrate a significant new contribution to knowledge in the discipline or field.

## 7. Declarations of Authenticity and Authorship Contribution in the Thesis with publication Format

A submission in the *Thesis with Publication* format requires three types of declarations to be included:

- a. A list of scholarly publications and/or paper manuscripts, including verification of Scopus quartile ranking of the publication, or other indicator of quality, and of the status of the paper in relation to its publication or acceptance (included before the Table of Contents);
- b. A [declaration](#) by the candidate about co-authorship and contribution to the work for each scholarly publication and/or paper manuscript including acknowledgement of joint or multiple authors and verification of each of their contributions and permissions (included in an appendix).
- c. Copies of the scholarly publications and/or paper manuscripts.

## 8. Inclusion of Publications Completed Prior to Enrolment

A candidate may have been granted approval to incorporate scholarly publications which were published prior to enrolment in their doctoral degree at Victoria University and/or manuscripts they may have ready or deemed to be ready by their proposed Principal Supervisor, for submission.

No papers or manuscripts that have been published more than 10 years prior to the expected thesis submission date can be considered for inclusion. Similarly, no papers or

manuscripts can be considered for inclusion that have arisen from research previously submitted for examination for another degree.