



**VICTORIA
UNIVERSITY**

GUIDELINES ON THESIS WITH PUBLICATION FOR PROSPECTIVE APPLICANTS & CURRENT CANDIDATES

Graduate Research School

These guidelines have been developed for **PhD** prospective applicants and current enrolled PhD students/candidates. The *Thesis with Publication* format is **ONLY** available for PhD candidates.

The *Thesis with Publication* format of scholarly publications and the targeted outlets for the manuscripts to be submitted for publication are to be of high quality and must be linked and framed to produce a coherent and cogent thesis. The term scholarly publications refer to a report of research presented in the format of a journal article, monograph, book chapter, published conference paper or other format relevant to the candidate's discipline.

The scholarly publications and/or accepted manuscripts must be framed and linked with material to:

- a. contextualise the research problem;
- b. justify the theoretical framework;
- c. comprehensively review the relevant literature (especially that not covered in depth within the scholarly publications and manuscripts);
- d. 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
- e. draw conclusions, in relation to the overarching research problem or theme, about its contribution to knowledge, its limitations and practical significance.

1. Background

The *Thesis 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 all research and writing is undertaken during enrolled candidature with the format supporting the production of timely high quality publishable material as part of the overall thesis development process. The model of *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, prior to admission.

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 and to the University. 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 better 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. There are also potentially broader benefits to the University as a greater focus on writing for journal publication can contribute to the further development of a quality, publication-focussed research culture, as well as increasing the visibility and profile of VU research groups and further building track record for both students and their supervisors.

2. 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 expectations of the rigour, depth and quality of the research and its associated new contribution to knowledge are identical to those expected in other formats. For example, a PhD 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.

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.

3. Advanced Candidature and Candidature Processes for Thesis with Publication

Advanced Candidature- Application for Admission for a Research Degree (Prospective applicant)

The University HDR Procedures allow for the prospective applicant to incorporate previously published Papers that relate directly to the research topic and project, if the incorporation of this material is confirmed to meet University standards and guidelines applying the procedures for Advanced Candidature approval.

Specifically, the prospective applicant may apply to be enrolled with Advanced Candidature, if they have commenced or produced work on a research project prior to applying for enrolment in a PhD program and have completed one or more scholarly papers/manuscripts for publication that they wish to be considered for incorporation into a PhD project submission in the '*Thesis with Publication*' format.

In the case where the prospective applicant is applying for approval to include scholarly paper/s/manuscripts previously completed, the Advanced Candidature review will involve a rigorous review of the academic merit and quality of the work proposed to be incorporated into the thesis submission, as well as the merit and integrity of the proposed PhD project overall and the suitability of each scholarly paper proposed for inclusion in relation to the PhD project's overall focus and aims. This review should include an external reviewer with demonstrated expertise in the field of the proposed PhD project. The review will determine not only whether Advanced Candidature will be granted, but also which of the proposed scholarly papers are approved for inclusion.

A prospective applicant accepted for admission with Advanced Candidature on the basis of a project proposal and one or more previously completed/published scholarly papers will be admitted as a candidate immediately and the work already done on the research project will be taken into account in determining the duration of the candidate's course. Time already consumed will be deducted from the maximum allowable duration for the PhD degree. In all cases the minimum period of enrolment prior to submission of the Thesis for a candidate admitted with Advanced Candidature is 12 month full-time (or equivalent part-time).

Candidature: Current Enrolled Candidates

The initial stages of enrolment and candidature for a PhD project in the *Thesis with Publication* follows the same processes as for other thesis formats. At the time that the graduate researcher presents for Confirmation of Candidature they are required to nominate the proposed thesis format and, if the proposed format is with publication, then the confirmation panel is expected to ensure that the project plan and timelines reflect an approach that can enable the planned scholarly publications and/or manuscripts to be produced and sufficient of them to be accepted for publication prior to the required thesis submission date.

As for all graduate researchers, Confirmation of Candidature includes careful scrutiny of the following:

- A detailed research proposal including literature review, methodology, proposed analysis and thesis format;
- A detailed budget outlining the resources required for the project;
- The academic merit, feasibility and viability of the student's proposed PhD project;
- The capacity of the Institute to ensure that adequate supervision, resources and infrastructure are available to support the proposed project;

The capacity of the candidate to undertake the project successfully in the format proposed within the time frame of the length of the PhD with the enrolment time fraction proposed. However, it may become apparent through the course of candidature that a change in thesis format is desirable.

This may occur because the planned schedule of producing scholarly publications/manuscripts and getting them accepted for publication has not been achieved, so it is judged more appropriate to produce a thesis in the standard format.

Alternatively, it may be that many 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.

There are two instances where a change in format post candidature confirmation is judged by the supervisor/s to be appropriate:

- At the either the Mid-Candidature Review or Towards Submission candidature milestone, the candidate must document and present this to the Panel. Following the presentation, the Research Institute Deputy Director or nominee must approve the

change, and the relevant Candidature Support Officer will update the candidate's record or

- At the time of thesis submission, the change must be declared on the Release of Thesis form and approved by the Research Institute Deputy Director or nominee and the relevant Candidature Support Officer will update the candidate's record. When examiners are appointed, they are notified of the format of the thesis and provided with the standard VU Examination guidelines together with additional supporting guidelines about the *Thesis with Publication* at VU.

4. Standards and Expectations for the PhD Degree

The PhD 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 PhD Thesis is expected to equate to a sustained piece of written work of 50,000-80,000 words in length. The University expectations regarding the length of time taken to complete a PhD is 3.5 - 4 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.

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 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 after peer review 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.

Scholarly publications included in the thesis must represent original research and must have been subject to academic 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.

The scholarly publications included in a 'Thesis with Publications' must not have been published more than 10 years before the date of the submission of the thesis for examination.

It is expected that the scholarly publications and the targeted outlets for the manuscripts accepted 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. Supervisors and candidates are reminded, however, that it is the academic standard of the overall thesis which is examined.

Manuscripts (as compared to publications) representing original research must be accepted for scholarly publication. Evidence of acceptance must be included in the appendix.

6. Thesis Format

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 manuscripts. The supervisory team is the main source of appropriate advice to PhD candidates with respect to disciplinary norms in these matters, and on the integrity and equivalence of the proposed thesis submission to that presented in a standard thesis format.

In addition, 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.

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 acceptance- the **Details of Included Papers: Thesis With Publication** must be incorporated 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- to be collected in Appendix to the thesis.
- c. copies of the scholarly publications and/or manuscripts.
- d. Evidence of acceptance for publications not yet published to be included in Appendix.