

POLICY ON THE SUBMISSION AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH DEGREE THESES

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POLICY ON THE SUBMISSION AND PRESENTATION OF RESEARCH DEGREE THESES

1. General Statements

- 1.1 This policy applies to all candidates for the award of the following research degrees: PhD (Doctor of Philosophy); MD (Doctor of Medicine); EngD (Doctor of Engineering); Doctoral Degrees by Examination and Thesis (Professional Doctorates); and MPhil (Master of Philosophy).
- 1.2 This policy does not apply to the PhD by Published Works, to Higher Doctorates, or to MRes (Master of Research) programmes.
- 1.3 Reference in this policy to a 'thesis' should also be taken to include equivalent forms of submission approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee.
- 1.4 The term 'candidate' is used in place of 'student' from the point of thesis submission.
- 1.5 Failure to follow the instructions in this policy may result in your School rejecting your thesis for examination.
- 1.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the [Policy and Procedure on the Final Deposit of Research Degree Theses](#).

2. Presenting Your Thesis for Examination

- 2.1 As a research degree student, you will prepare and present your thesis, describing your own work and the subject of your advanced study and research.
- 2.2 You are required to submit a single electronic copy of your thesis as a PDF for the purpose of examination (and re-examination, where applicable). Your School will provide you with instructions on the procedure, which may include submission by email or other method to support large and secure file transfer (e.g. FastFile or OneDrive).
- 2.3 It is mandatory in some Schools for the final version of the thesis to be uploaded to 'Turnitin' (plagiarism detection software) before being submitted for examination. Where this is the case, the 'Turnitin' report must be forwarded to the School with the thesis and other submission documents.
- 2.4 Where submission is via email, this must be from your University email account. Any transfer of files should be in accordance with the University's [Information Security policies](#).
- 2.5 Accompanying material should be submitted, where possible, in an appropriate electronic file format which must remain stable and accessible for examination. For data files, formats that can be accessed electronically are advisable. Digital datasets, analysis pipelines and methodologies,

including analysis scripts, should be submitted in a manner that permits examination and reproducibility. For some accompanying material, PDFs may be appropriate.

- 2.6 It may be necessary for some accompanying material to be submitted in hard copy or other format (e.g. A3 sheets as fold-outs for maps, diagrams and similar, or audio or visual material). Any document or material of a size or composition unsuited to electronic submission, should be provided as supplementary files in a standard and acceptable format.
- 2.7 You must submit the thesis to your School, with a Notice of Submission Form and Research Degree Thesis Statements and Declarations Form, by your latest submission deadline. If the deadline falls on a day on which the University is closed, your submission will be accepted on the next working day after the deadline.
- 2.8 You will not be permitted to amend, add to or delete from the thesis after it has been accepted by the Convenor of the Examining and referred for examination (see section 3, below).
- 2.9 Where one or both examiner(s) request a hard copy version of the thesis to assess, in addition to the electronic copy, your School will make the necessary arrangements for printing, binding and postage. To ensure version control, you will not be asked, nor permitted, to provide a separate hard copy. The thesis will be printed double-sided and exactly as submitted, and your School will not conduct any checks on formatting or presentation prior to despatching the thesis to the examiner(s).
- 2.10 You may wish to have a hard copy of your thesis printed for your own use during the examination. This is a matter of personal preference and you may refer to either an electronic or hard copy (or both), as preferred.

3. Accepting the Thesis for Examination

- 3.1 The Convenor of the Examining Board will look at your thesis and determine whether there is a case for accepting and referring it for examination. The decision will not be based on their personal views regarding the currency or strength of your research or writing, or whether your work meets the criteria for the award, as only your examiners can make this assessment. They will, however, review the format and presentation of the thesis in relation to the requirements outlined below.
- 3.2 In some cases, acceptance of your thesis will also be subject to payment of a submission fee. This will be where you:
 - .1 are re-submitting a thesis for further examination;
 - .2 are a staff candidate;

- .3 are beyond your thesis submission deadline, in a 'late submission' period;
 - .4 have been permitted re-registration for the purpose of examination, following previous withdrawal of your candidature.
- 3.3 Accepting the thesis for examination shall not in any way prejudice the findings or the decision of your examiners.
- 3.4 If the Convenor is not satisfied that the thesis should be accepted for examination, you may appeal their decision in line with the University Review Procedure.

4. Format and Word Length

- 4.1 All research degree theses must be presented in English or Welsh, apart from quotations and recognised technical terms.
- 4.2 The maximum number of words for the thesis is provided below:
- .1 PhD (standard format): 80,000 words¹;
 - .2 EngD: 80,000 words;
 - .3 MD: 60,000 words;
 - .4 MPhil (standard format): 50,000 words;
 - .5 Professional doctorates: 50,000 words, and as directed in the programme information.
- 4.3 The calculation of the word length excludes the summary, acknowledgements, declarations, contents pages, appendices, tables, diagrams and figures, references, bibliography, footnotes and endnotes.
- 4.4 Schools may exercise discretion in accepting a thesis that is longer than the maximum word length, up to 10% more than the stated limit, but only where this is clearly justified by the nature of the particular topic.
- 4.5 If, exceptionally, a School considers that a thesis in excess of this discretionary allowance should be accepted for examination, the Head of School or their nominee should apply to the relevant College Postgraduate Dean and, if approved, should inform the nominated Examiners prior to their appointment².
- 4.6 Where a student who has been examined for the award of PhD is required to make corrections to their thesis for the award of MPhil, or the student

¹ For creative disciplines, exceptions apply: please see sections 4.9 to 4.12.

² Policy variation: Decisions may be taken by the PGR Student Matters Group (variation to Policy approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee [ASQC] on 8 May 2025).

requests to re-present their thesis for MPhil, they are not required to reduce the length of their thesis to the maximum word limit permitted for MPhil, unless directed to do so by the Examiners.

- 4.7 Appendices may be included if such material forms a useful addition to, or explanation of, work contained in the thesis, and if that format is the most appropriate way of presenting the information. Examples include large data tables and non-text material, such as audio or video recordings.
- 4.8 In relation to named practice-led PhD and MPhil submissions, the thesis should be prepared as follows, rather than in accordance with the maximum word limits for standard format PhD/MPhil given above.
- 4.9 For PhD in Creative and Critical Writing, the submission will take one of the following forms:
- .1 in the case of prose (novel, short story, work of creative non-fiction or play/film script), the creative portion and critical commentary together should not exceed 110,000 words with the critical commentary comprising not less than 20,000 words;
 - .2 in the case of poetry, a collection of poetry, prose poetry or micro-fiction, the creative portion should amount to around 60 pages, with an accompanying critical commentary of not less than 20,000 words;
 - .3 an integrated Creative/Critical submission of no more than 100,000 words.
- 4.10 For PhD in Music Composition, the submission will be a major work or portfolio of works of original compositions accompanied by a critical commentary (of ca. 20,000 words). The submission shall include recorded material in a format agreed by the School of Music.
- 4.11 For PhD in Music Performance, the submission will take one of the following forms:
- a 90-minute performance plus a thesis of ca. 50,000 words or a scholarly edition with critical commentary;
 - a portfolio of performances of ca. 220-minutes in total, supported by a written commentary of ca. 20,000 words.
- Performances may be live or a sound and video recording (DVD or equivalent), or a combination.
- Post-examination, a recording of the performance(s), in a format agreed by the School of Music, shall form part of the durable record.
- 4.12 For PhD in Creative Practice in Architecture, the submission will be an exhibition of original design work, (e.g. models, films), accompanied by a

critical commentary of between 40,000 and 50,000 words. A list of exhibition items shall be included as an appendix to the commentary. Post-examination, a record of the exhibition (e.g. exhibition catalogue, photographs, video), in a format agreed by the Welsh School of Architecture, shall form part of the durable record.

4.13 Where a programme of study and research has centred on the creation of a non-text artefact (e.g. database, archive, design), the artefact may be included as a major component of the thesis. The artefact must be accompanied by a written commentary. The length of the written element should be determined by the nature of the research, but should be no less than 50% of the thesis as a whole in terms of its contribution. The artefact must be recorded in an appropriate format, agreed by the School, for examination and for the durable record.

4.14 For professional doctorates, where in accordance with the programme information, the submission may be a research portfolio in place of a traditional thesis, and may include one or more academic papers.

5. Preliminary Pages

5.1 Each copy of the thesis must contain the following required pages:

- .1 a title page (see Appendix 3);
- .2 a summary of no more than 300 words;
- .3 a list of contents, which includes the page number for each chapter and sub-division listed;
- .4 acknowledgements, where this is an expectation of your sponsor.

5.2 The list of contents should itemise all chapters and relevant sub-divisions of the thesis and give a page number for each item. Any other lists (e.g. tables, diagrams, illustrations) should be included separately, immediately after the contents list. Such lists should give the page number of each item on the list.

5.3 The title page must be in the standard format presented in Appendix 3 and must include the following details only:

- .1 the full title of the thesis, including any sub-title;
- .2 the degree award title for which the thesis is presented;
- .3 the University name;

- .4 the year of presentation, or re-presentation where a thesis is being re-examined (month and year)³;
 - .5 the candidate's full name, as recorded on the student record.
- 5.4 The title page must have a plain background. No images should be used: this includes the University logo.
- 5.5 The final word count (see section 4, above) must be included in the Research Degree Thesis Statements and Declarations Form.
- 5.6 The preliminary pages may also include a dedication and/or acknowledgements (see section 9). These must appear after the required pages listed above. This is optional unless your sponsor (e.g. a Research Council) requires acknowledgement of their support to be included in your thesis. (Refer to the terms and conditions of funding).
- 5.7 You may also include a preface that is a brief statement to highlight how any papers you have authored or co-authored, published or in press, relate to the chapters of your thesis (see section 8).

6. Document Formatting

- 6.1 For the text of the thesis, a clear, readable font type should be used that is recommended for easy reading (sans serif fonts such as Arial, Tahoma and Verdana). Font size should be no less than 12 point.
- 6.2 Paragraphs should be left-aligned, rather than justified (aligned to both left and right margins), and line spacing should be wide enough to make text more generally accessible (e.g. 1.5 spacing).
- 6.3 Characters used in all other texts (e.g. footnotes, figure captions) must not be less than 11 point.
- 6.4 The preliminary pages should be numbered in roman numerals (i.e. i, ii, iii ...). Thereafter, page numbering should consist of a single sequence of Arabic numerals (i.e. 1, 2, 3 ...) throughout the thesis. Page numbers must be displayed on all pages except the title page. The pagination sequence should include not only the text of the thesis but also the preliminary pages, diagrams, tables, figures, illustrations, appendices, references etc.
- 6.5 Drawings, figures, charts, etc. may be in black and white and/or in colour; in all cases they must be clear and legible. Characters used within tables and figures must be legible and of a sufficiently large font size for general accessibility. The placing of text over images should be avoided.

³ For theses being submitted after any corrections have been made and approved by the Examiner(s), the date on the title page should be the original date of submission. In the case of re-examination, the date included should be the date of re-submission.

7. Acknowledging the Work of Others

- 7.1 When submitting your thesis for examination, you will be asked to declare that, except where indicated by specific reference, the work and ideas contained in the thesis are your own.
- 7.2 You must ensure that any material authored by a third party in your thesis has been sufficiently acknowledged and, where applicable, you have the permission of the copyright owner. (See Section 12 below.)
- 7.3 Where any aspects of your research were undertaken in collaboration with, or with the assistance of, others, the extent and nature of these contributions should be highlighted in your acknowledgements, as well as clearly referenced within the main text of the thesis.

8. The inclusion of papers (or disciplinary equivalent) in your thesis

- 8.1 The University permits a thesis to be in the format of 'thesis with publication', where one or more papers (or disciplinary equivalent, such as a book chapter), whether published or unpublished, can be integrated into the thesis in place of traditional chapters. If your thesis is in this format, please refer to the separate guidance: [Presentation of Research Degree Theses: Guidance on the Inclusion of Papers and Published Work](#).
- 8.2 If you are presenting a traditional thesis, you may also include work that you have published, but which has been adapted to conform with the format of a standard narrative thesis. If this is the case, you should also refer to [Presentation of Research Degree Theses: Guidance on the Inclusion of Papers and Published Work](#).

9. Acknowledgements/Dedications

- 9.1 You may have benefitted from the support of family, friends and peers whilst undertaking your studies and you may wish to express your thanks in an acknowledgements/dedication section of your thesis. If you choose to do this, you should be mindful of the nature and tone of your comments as they may be read widely, including by future employers, funders or other colleagues.
- 9.2 For data protection purposes, you should not include any private personal details or other confidential information about yourself or others in the acknowledgements section or elsewhere in the thesis.

10. Proofreading Your Thesis

- 10.1 When preparing your thesis for examination, you are responsible for ensuring that there are minimal typing errors and/or spelling mistakes, and that bibliographic citations and references are consistent throughout.

11. The Use of Third-Party Editors

- 11.1 When submitting your thesis for examination, you will be required to declare that, except where indicated by specific reference, the work and ideas contained in the thesis are your own.
- 11.2 However, there may be cases in which the presentation of the thesis would benefit from proofreading or editing by a third party, without altering the academic content of the work upon which you will be assessed, and where the use of such a service will not compromise the needs of the discipline: for example, where the accurate use of language is important in the assessment of the thesis.
- 11.3 If considering the use of a third-party editor, you should first consult with your lead supervisor.
- 11.4 A 'third-party editor' refers to any individual or company outside of your supervisory team, whether they are paid or unpaid. Your family, friends and peers who assist in the drafting of your written work are also required to comply with the instructions below.
- 11.5 Members of your supervisory team are not considered to be a 'third party' and are therefore not restricted to offering advice within the limits of this policy. It is an expectation that one or more members of your supervisory team will comment on drafts of your thesis which would normally include guidance on the quality of the presentation.
- 11.6 If you use a third-party editor to improve the presentation of your thesis, you must do so in accordance with the Use of Third-Party Editors by Research Degree Students Procedure, attached as Appendix 2 to this policy.
- 11.7 You will remain responsible for the content of your submitted thesis and should not accept editorial advice beyond the limits permitted by the procedure.
- 11.8 Failure to comply with the procedure could be classed as unfair practice and dealt with under the Academic Misconduct Procedure (Research Students).
- 11.9 The use of third-party editing may not be used as grounds for appeal.

12. Third-Party Copyright

- 12.1 Copying third-party material for the purpose of an examination, provided it is fully referenced, is generally permitted by copyright legislation. After a thesis has been examined, however, permission from the copyright owner may be required to allow the work to become available to other users.
- 12.2 If your thesis contains material authored by a third party for which there are copyright restrictions, you must ensure that the copyright licence or

permission extends to the preservation of your thesis and to making it available to others.

- 12.3 Alternatively, where permission is denied or cannot be obtained from the copyright owner, you may make a redacted version of your thesis available following the examination. In such cases, the third-party material should be removed from the thesis and replaced with a bibliographic reference.
- 12.4 If you have already published articles based on the content of your thesis, you should check that you will not be breaking the terms of the publishing agreement by the reproduction of your own text, images, etc. in your thesis.
- 12.5 Advice on copyright in your thesis is available from copyright@cardiff.ac.uk.

13. Deposit of Successful Theses After Examination

- 13.1 A successful research degree thesis, once fully approved, must be uploaded into the University's digital repository (ORCA) (or, where applicable, lodged in the library) before the award can be confirmed.
- 13.2 The thesis will then be made openly available, subject to any temporary restrictions on access approved by the University.
- 13.3 Guidance on uploading your thesis into the digital repository is available on the student intranet and in the [Policy and Procedure on the Final Deposit of Research Degree Theses](#)⁴.
- 13.4 Where a thesis is redacted prior to its deposit in the digital repository due to copyright restrictions, a copy of the final, un-redacted version must separately be submitted to the ORCA Team, who will securely store the thesis on behalf of the University Library Service.
- 13.5 A thesis may be held by the library in print form only, and not stored in the digital repository, only where:
 - .1 the thesis includes a creative or performing arts component (practice-led research degrees) and deposit in the digital repository would compromise commercial publication of the work: in such cases, the critical commentary part of the thesis will be uploaded into the digital repository unless it is integrated with the creative work; or
 - .2 this has been approved by the University, following an application made to the relevant College Postgraduate Dean for reasons of copyright or other restriction⁵.

⁴ <https://intranet.cardiff.ac.uk/students/study/postgraduate-research-support/thesis-and-examinations/submitting-your-thesis/uploading-your-thesis-to-orca>

⁵ Policy variation: Decisions may be taken by the PGR Student Matters Group (variation to Policy approved by the Academic Standards and Quality Committee [ASQC] on 8 May 2025).

- 13.6 Where a thesis is to be held in print form only, 2 copies are required: 1 copy for deposit with the University Library Service and 1 copy with the National Library of Wales. It may be made available for inter-library loan, subject to the expiry of any temporary bar on access, or access to the thesis may permanently be restricted.
- 13.7 Print-form theses should be bound permanently within boards, the binding being of a fixed kind in which leaves are permanently secured in the manner of a hardback book; the spine should bear the surname and initials of the candidate, the full or abbreviated title of the work, the name of the degree for which it was submitted and the date of submission (month and year).
- 13.8 You are required to sign and submit a new Research Degree Thesis Statements and Declarations Form to accompany the final version of your thesis.

14. Ownership

- 14.1 By default, you own the intellectual property (IP; including copyright) in the work for which you are solely responsible. In some circumstances, however, you may assign your ownership interest in IP to the University or to a third party, either as a condition of a studentship agreement, or where there is the potential for commercialisation of IP that is shared with your supervisor.
- 14.2 Deposit of the approved version of your thesis in the University's digital repository, or in the library where in print form, grants Cardiff University a licence to store a copy of your thesis. You remain the copyright owner of your thesis and can publish the thesis elsewhere, subject to any conditions of a studentship agreement or contractual obligation in the case of staff candidates.

15. Restrictions on Access

- 15.1 An application for a temporary bar on access to the thesis may be made in accordance with the Bar on Access Policy (Research Degree Theses).

Appendix 1: Statements and Declarations to be Signed by the Candidate and Submitted loose with the Thesis (see Research Degree Thesis Statements and Declarations Form)

Statement 1

This thesis is being submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of ... (*insert PhD, MD, MPhil, etc., as appropriate*)

Statement 2

This work has not been submitted in substance for any other degree or award at this or any other university or place of learning, nor is it being submitted concurrently for any other degree or award (outside of any formal collaboration agreement between the University and a partner organisation)

Statement 3

I hereby give consent for my thesis, if accepted, to be available in the University's Open Access repository (or, where approved, to be available in the University's library and for inter-library loan), and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations, subject to the expiry of a University-approved bar on access if applicable.

Declaration

This thesis is the result of my own independent work, except where otherwise stated, and the views expressed are my own. Other sources are acknowledged by explicit references. The thesis has not been edited by a third party beyond what is permitted by Cardiff University's Use of Third-Party Editors by Research Degree Students Procedure.

Appendix 2: Use of Third-Party Editors by Research Degree Students Procedure

If you choose to use a third-party editor to improve the presentation of your thesis, you must do so in accordance with the procedure outlined below.

You should provide the third party with a copy of the following instructions before they undertake any work.

1. The third party should provide comments or amendments via track changes and the research degree candidate should choose whether to accept or reject these changes in a master copy.
2. A third-party editor cannot be used:
 - to change the text of the thesis to clarify and/or develop the ideas and arguments
 - to reduce the length of the thesis so it falls within the specified word limit
 - to correct information within the thesis
 - to change ideas and arguments put forward within the thesis
 - to translate the text into English/Welsh.
3. A third-party editor can be used to offer advice on:
 - spelling and punctuation
 - formatting and sorting of footnotes and endnotes for consistency and order
 - ensuring the thesis follows the conventions of grammar and syntax in written English/Welsh
 - the breaking up of overly long sentences and/or paragraphs
 - changing active and personal usages into passive and impersonal, as may be appropriate
 - improving the positioning of tables and illustrations and the grammar, spelling and punctuation of any text in or under tables and illustrations
 - ensuring consistency of page numbers, headers and footers.

Appendix 3: Title Page Template

**Thesis Title and Any Sub-Titles, in Bold, with
Each Word Capitalised**

Candidate's full name,
as recorded on the student record

A thesis submitted for the degree of
[Doctor of Philosophy / Master of Philosophy etc.]

Cardiff University

Month Year