



Graduate Research Board

Principles for the Production of Alternative Thesis Format (Theses as a Collection of Papers)

1. Introduction

The Academic Regulations note that a Governing Board may make arrangements for the examination of theses presented in alternative formats. These principles, developed by the Graduate Research Board, refer to the alternative format described as:

“a collection of papers of publishable/peer reviewed standard describing a coherent programme of research, accompanied by a critical and theoretical overview of the work presented in the papers” (Section 7.53).

These guidelines apply to the Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), the Doctor of Medicine (MD) and to Professional Doctorate degrees.

Please note that the document presents high level guidelines on this thesis format. Students, in Schools that use this format, should ensure that they consult their supervisor/Research Studies Panel (RSP) for guidance on local norms and practices regarding the number of papers, quality of papers and where reference to shared research has occurred (statement of authorship etc).

Additional information on the production of theses can be found on the Graduate Studies Document Repository. ¹

2. Principles of Alternative Thesis Format (Thesis as a Collection of Papers)

a. *Decision on Format*

A decision on the thesis format should be made by the student in consultation with their supervisor(s) and other members of the Research Studies Panel. It is recommended that the decision normally be made at the time of the Stage Transfer Assessment when the research plan is clearly defined, and research is underway.

b. *Number of Papers*

It is recommended that the thesis normally comprise three or more papers but it is acknowledged that a ‘normal’ number may vary across specific disciplines. Students should discuss discipline specific guidelines with their supervisor(s) and RSP. If it is not possible to identify at least two publishable papers, that can form the basis of a thesis of an appropriate length, then the ‘traditional’ monograph format may be more appropriate.

¹ [https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/t4media/Guidelines for Prep, Submission Examination of Research Theses.pdf](https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/t4media/Guidelines%20for%20Prep,%20Submission%20Examination%20of%20Research%20Theses.pdf)

c. Thesis Structure

- i.* As in a traditional monograph, candidates pursuing this alternative format should provide an overview of the thesis as a whole and a separate discussion of the research findings. Typically, the thesis will – as appropriate to the discipline – describe the rationale for the research, include a literature review or theory chapter contextualizing the research, a separate methodology chapter as appropriate, and a concluding or discussion chapter. It is recommended that candidates discuss word or page limits for the introductory and concluding chapters with their supervisor(s) and Research Studies Panel, as norms will vary across disciplines.
- ii.* Published papers should not normally be included in the body of the thesis but should be adapted to ensure a consistent and uniform presentation style throughout the thesis. Candidates should be aware of copyright issues and discuss these with their supervisor(s) and RSP members. To avoid such issues, it is recommended that the penultimate version of a paper accepted for publication – rather than the final version – be adapted for inclusion in the thesis. Candidates may use digital object identifiers (DOIs) to link to forthcoming or published papers so that these may be easily accessed by the examiners.
- iii.* Review papers that provide background material may be included but only if the candidate is the first author. Such papers generally do not count as original contributions unless they provide substantive meta-analyses.
- iv.* Methods papers may be included where new methods have been developed by the candidate as part of their research

d. Originality of Research

In line with the requirement that doctoral research is ‘original research’ (see Academic Regulations, Section 7.32, and UCD Policy on Graduate Research Theses), the papers included in the thesis should not include research by a fellow student that has been presented or will be presented for examination in another thesis.

e. Authorship, Supervisor Involvement & Acknowledgements

The student should be the sole author, or the lead/primary author of papers included in the thesis. In some disciplines sole authorship is the norm. In other disciplines, where research is typically undertaken within a research group overseen by the supervisor/s (often the principal investigator/s) the papers should include the supervisor/s as author/s. Where papers have been jointly authored or multi-authored, the nature and extent of the candidate’s contribution and the contribution of any co-authors should be formally stated in the thesis. It is recommended that the student discuss College and/or discipline specific guidelines with their supervisor and RSP. The form in section provides a mechanism for collecting this information.

C. Acknowledgement of Authorship (Template)

The form below provides a useful mechanism for collecting the information needed to ensure that shared authorship is appropriately acknowledged in a thesis (and acts as a guide to the minimum information that should be included in an acknowledgement of authorship). This form can be completed for each paper included in a thesis.

1. Student Details	
Student Name:	
Student Number:	E-mail:
School:	
Principal supervisor:	E-mail:
Research Degree for which thesis is being submitted:	
Title of Research thesis:	
2. Student Contribution to the Paper	
This co-authorship declaration applies to the following paper:	
A percentage must be specified as well as a brief outline of the student's intellectual and practical contribution to the research presented in the paper. Each section of the paper should be listed separately.(eg Introduction, Methods, Figure 1, Table 2 etc.)	
Percentage Contribution %:_____	
Outline of student contribution for each section of paper:	
3. Other Authors contribution to the paper (Outline briefly the contribution of other authors to the paper)	
Author	Contribution
	% Contribution:_____
	Brief outline of contribution:
	% Contribution:_____
	Brief outline of contribution:
	% Contribution:_____
	Brief outline of contribution:

Version History

#	Author	Content/Changes
1	Assoc. Prof. N. Brady, Graduate Research Board	Version 1 of Guidelines

If you have a query about this document, contact details for the GRB supports for School can be found at <https://www.ucd.ie/graduatestudies/graduateresearchboard>.

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