

Appendix 1: College Guidelines on Alternative Thesis Format

CSSL Guidelines for Alternative Thesis Format

Overview

The existing University regulations (21.1) outline the possibility of a PhD candidate pursuing a thesis in an alternative format to the traditional monograph. The regulation states that:

‘Where a School has made suitable arrangements to examine theses presented in alternative formats, a candidate may be examined on the basis of:

- (i) 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.
- (ii) a substantial collection of original creative material, together with a written thesis which contextualises the work within an academic framework.’

The College of Social Sciences & Law with delegated authority to the Graduate School Board have adopted CSSL guidelines that Schools must operate within, in relation to alternative thesis formats, particularly via a series of papers which is most directly relevant in the College.

These guidelines act to establish a minimum set of requirements for the pursuit of a PhD thesis using an alternative format. Students should note that Schools within the CSSL may decide to establish more stringent standards within the context of the framework laid down in this document.

Guidelines

1. In CSSL, published papers themselves may not be included in the body of a thesis but may be adapted to form an integral part of a thesis and thereby make a relevant contribution to the main theme of a thesis. However, publications derived from the work in a thesis may be bound as supplementary material at the back of a thesis;
2. A thesis in an alternative format such as a collection of publishable/peer-reviewed papers must be considered equivalent (in terms of quality and original contribution to knowledge) to the already existing traditional PhD monograph;
3. A minimum equivalent of three papers as either sole or lead author must be submitted to be considered equivalent to a traditional PhD monograph. Where the PhD candidate is not the lead author on any of the three papers, a fourth paper is required;

4. Where papers are co-authored, a definitive statement outlining the precise contribution of each of the co-authors must be submitted with the thesis for examination;
5. A thesis in an alternative format must address a common set of research objectives. It is a single, integrated programme of supervised research whose outputs are the publication of a series of thematically integrated papers which cumulatively address a set of core research questions;
6. For students pursuing the alternative thesis format, the thesis must include a separate substantial discussion that provides an overview of the thesis as a whole. Typically, this will (where appropriate to the discipline) describe the context of and rationale for the research, a literature/theory chapter contextualising the research, a supplementary methods chapter outlining in greater detail the overall research design and analysis framework, and conclusion;
7. The decision as to whether a student pursues a traditional PhD monograph or an alternative thesis format rests with the assigned supervisor(s) in consultation with the Research Studies Panel (RSP);
8. The thesis examination committee have the final say on equivalence within the context of the guidelines issued by the University.