



FACULTY OF HEALTH SCIENCES DOCTORAL AND MASTER'S COMMITTEE (DMC)

GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSION OF PUBLICATIONS IN A DOCTORAL THESIS

(Adopted by the DMC at a meeting on 20 May, 2011)

This Guideline is intended to assist in answering the many 'frequently asked questions' that we receive with regard to inclusion of publications in a PhD thesis.

GUIDELINES

When a student contemplates inclusion of publication(s) in their PhD thesis, the Faculty of Health Sciences requires that the following is considered:

GENERAL

- All rules as laid out by UCT must be satisfied. It must be borne in mind that the PhD is a UCT degree (with the oversight of the DDB) and not a Faculty degree. Further, that a UCT PhD is considered a research degree of high international standing and recognition.
- A plan to include publications in a thesis should be developed by the student in consultation with their supervisor. The best time to do this will vary from project to project. Advice may be sought from their Departmental Postgraduate Committee (or equivalent) and the Faculty Doctoral and Masters Committee.
 - In addition to considering a plan and structure for the thesis, Rule 6.7(iii) must be satisfied, viz. "the candidate's plan (to include published papers) has had the written support of the Faculty's Higher Degrees Committee (or equivalent) and the written approval of the Doctoral Degrees Board prior to submission".
 - It is best that the Committee consider the plan in the final year of the PhD, once publications have been submitted, accepted or published, as it is theoretically impossible for a Committee (or the DDB) to give approval if no publications have appeared, been submitted or at the very least written.
 - Requests to include publications in a thesis must be considered on an individual basis – i.e. 'blanket' approval for a group of student PhD's cannot be sought nor given.



SCOPE OF THE PHD THESIS

- The thesis (and also its motivation), must acknowledge wherever appropriate, that it is a doctoral thesis that includes publication(s), and that the thesis itself is not simply a compilation of relevant publications. It must be a thematically coherent and substantive exploratory discourse, presented as a composite body of work with all the necessary elements as to make it comparable (and therefore examinable) to a PhD presented in the traditional way.
 - A PhD examiner has to be satisfied that a candidate has formulated the right research questions and mastered the appropriate methodologies and analytical processes necessary to answer such questions in a scientifically defensible way – publications may not always be adequate to demonstrate this aspect of a candidate's work.
 - The main aim(s) and answer(s) to the research questions must be apparent and they must permeate the thesis as a whole. Even though there are publication(s) included, “the thesis must nonetheless show acceptable academic style, scholarly content and coherence as a connected account with a satisfactory introduction, statement of thesis and conclusion” [Rule 6.7(i)].
 - The thesis must include a thorough and critical literature review that also succeeds in demonstrating acceptable academic style and scholarly content – as would be true of any PhD thesis. This must be in addition to any literature review sections appearing in the included publications. The exception would be where the student has published the literature review in the form of a systematic or meta-analysis, and is included as one or more of the complete publications (in which cases the literature review may form a significant piece of ‘original’ research in its own right).
 - There must be a significant academic discussion leading to clearly articulated conclusions, based on the thesis as a whole.
 - There should be consistency in referencing style throughout the thesis (other than in the publications themselves where different journals may require different styles).

NATURE OF THE PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THE PHD THESIS

- It should be clear to the reader/examiner what the rationale for including papers is. It should demonstrate specifically how including the publication(s) assist(s) in fulfilling the thesis. We suggest that each paper is prefaced with a synopsis of how the paper contributes to the thesis aims and objectives. This in addition to full discussion in the appropriate place(s).
- Typically up to 5 papers could be included’ although 3-4 is probably the norm. It is quite possible for the publications to address only a part of the thesis. A single publication may be included which deals with a part of the thesis (or in rare circumstance the whole thesis).
- It is expected that the publication is published in a UCT-accredited international peer-reviewed journal. For a publication to be considered as an ‘included publication’, it should be already published or ‘in press’ (i.e. accepted for publication).



- In rare circumstances it may be that the ‘included publication’ is of another type (e.g. a policy document). In such cases the motivation and ‘publication’ would have to be considered on its specific merits and strongly motivated.
- It is expected that the student is the sole or lead author of each included publication, as the student should be the primary researcher. If not, an exceptional motivation is required.

SUPPORT FROM CO-AUTHORS (OF PUBLICATIONS INCLUDED IN THE PHD THESIS)

- Rule 6.3 states that: “The thesis must constitute a substantial contribution to knowledge in the chosen subject and may embody only the original work of the candidate with such acknowledged extracts from the work of others as may be pertinent.” In accordance with this, where included publication(s) are multi-authored (as would be the norm), it should be made unambiguously clear at what levels the candidate was involved in the research and publication(s). This should be verified by the supervisor(s). This in order to answer the question: ‘Has the student demonstrated sufficient intellectual input and that after input of co-authors, has the student advanced knowledge sufficiently in all the publications together, to qualify for the PhD?’ Sufficient intellectual drive and lead has to be demonstrated by a student.
- Where co-authored publications are included it is advisable that written letters of support and understanding be obtained from each co-author, attesting to their agreement on the stated role that the student and they played in the study. In certain cases, where there are a large number of co-authors, the principal investigator and supervisor can sign such support on behalf of the group.
- If co-authors themselves are PhD students, they should verify that they will not be including this publication(s) in their own PhD thesis.
- In order to avoid any potential copyright issues we recommend that the student informs the publishing journals of their use of their published material in a PhD.