UNIVERSITY OF CAPE TOWN
DOCTORAL DEGREES BOARD

GUIDELINES FOR THE INCLUSION OF PUBLICATIONS IN A DOCTORAL THESIS

This Guideline is intended to assist in answering the 'frequently asked questions' that PhD students and their supervisors ask with regard to inclusion of publications in a PhD thesis as envisaged in Rule GP 6.7, which states (inter alia):

'A PhD candidate who contemplates including published papers in his/her thesis must accept that approval to do so is not automatic. If a candidate contemplates doing this, he/she must note this in his/her MoU with his/her supervisor each year. In addition he/she and his/her supervisor are advised to seek the advice of the Faculty's higher degrees committee about his/her plan to do so at an early stage (acting in accordance with any internal procedures and guidelines that a particular faculty may require). While the relevant faculty committee will not be able to give a binding answer, it will be able to indicate to the candidate and his/her supervisor whether: (i) it is likely to support the proposal; or (b) it is unlikely to support submission according to the plan outlined and why. A binding decision can only be given by the DDB. It is accepted that this may not be possible until sometime into the PhD work.' (Taken from UCT Handbook 3, 2012, page 29)

This rule specifically refers to those cases where a candidate is including in the thesis, a literal and word-for-word rendition of a paper already published, in full.

It is understood that there may be minor inter-faculty differences in theses including such publications, which reflect the variation in publishing norms between disciplines.

It is generally accepted that elements of a thesis may already be published, but not necessarily *verbatim* nor in full. Such instances are covered by Rule GP 7, in which permission of the supervisor, and not the DDB, is required. Rule GP 7 states:

'A candidate may, subject to the prior written approval of his or her supervisor and subject to the provisions of rule GP9, publish a part or the whole of the work done by him or her under supervision for the degree before presenting his or her thesis for examination.' (Taken from UCT Handbook 3, 2012, page 29)

GUIDELINES

When a student contemplates inclusion of publication(s) in his or her PhD thesis as envisaged under Rule GP6.7, the DDB 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 their Faculty Higher Degrees Committee (or equivalent).

- In addition to considering a plan and structure for the thesis, Rule 6.7 must be satisfied, *viz.* "A binding decision can only be given by the DDB". Thus, formal permission must be sought from the DDB prior to submission for examination.

- It is best that the Faculty committees (on behalf of the DDB) only consider the plan once publications have been submitted, accepted or published, as it is theoretically impossible for a committee (or the DDB) to give advice (or 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 and scholarly 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.It is important to note that UCT does not offer a PhD "by publications". The University offers a PhD which requires a thesis to be produced in accordance with standard requirements – and in fulfilling these requirements it is possible, if the prescribed permission has been obtained, to *include* publications in the thesis.

    - A PhD examiner has to be satisfied that a candidate has formulated appropriate research questions and mastered the relevant methodologies, analytical and presentation processes necessary to answer such questions in a discipline-specific, scholarly defensible way – publications alone cannot be adequate to demonstrate this aspect of a candidates' 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 aims and conclusion.

    - 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 instance the literature review may form a significant piece of 'original' research in it's 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).

- It is expected that the publication is published in an 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), or at the least submitted and under review by the editorial team of a UCT-accredited international peer-reviewed journal.

- In some circumstances it may be that the 'included publication' is of another type (e.g. a policy document or technical report). In such cases the motivation and 'publication' would have to be considered on its specific merits and motivated accordingly.

- It is expected that the student is the lead author of each included publication, as the student should be the primary researcher.

- All included publications must have been written under the supervision of the supervisor(s) while registered as a PhD student.

- Publications that have not been written under the supervision of the supervisor as part of the PhD may not constitute 'included' publications.

- There should be a consistent format style throughout the thesis (font, layout, table and figure numbering, etc).

- Rule GP 6.8 stipulates a maximum word count for a PhD thesis of 80 000. In the case of a thesis including publications this remains so – the included publications are not over and above the 80 000 and must be included in the total word count (references are not included in the word count).

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, it should be made unambiguously clear at what levels the candidate was involved in the research and publication(s), and what the role of co-authors was/were. This should be verified by the supervisor(s). There is no rule regarding a maximum number of allowed co-authors but it must be understood that the more co-authors listed, the more difficult it will be for a student to demonstrate their own intellectual drive and lead.

- It is best that written letters of support be obtained from each co-author, attesting to their agreement on the stated contributions that the candidate and they made to 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.