Guidance for candidates for PhD or MD by Publication

Why PhD/MD by publication?

The publication route is offered only to staff, as an alternative to the standard PhD or MD route. It is designed to enable recognition of the research activities of those members of staff who have published work but have not completed a PhD or MD. Prospective applicants should first ensure that they refer to the appropriate University Regulations for PhD or MD by Publication.

Before applying

It is suggested that prospective applicants have an early discussion with their Head of Department, or appropriate delegate, prior to making a formal application. Since only work that has been published is eligible for submission, the discussion should be around the coherence and substance of the work and the practicality of producing a suitable commentary. Where the applicant is considering submitting co-authored work the discussion should include whether the candidate has made a sufficiently substantial individual contribution to work that has been published collaboratively.

How to apply

The applicant must discuss their plans with their departmental PG Tutor before completing the Application for Admission as a University Staff Candidate form, ensuring that they tick the ‘PhD/MD by Publication’ route, and return this to the Admissions Secretary along with:

- A CV
- Brief outline of the content of your thesis
- A copy of your University of Sheffield contract
- Letter of support from the Head of Department

Where an applicant is already registered as a staff candidate for PhD or MD and wishes to change to the publication route they should complete a Change of Candidature form.

Monitoring

All students must follow their department’s monitoring procedures. Students must follow these whilst registered for the degree of PhD or MD by Publication.

Training

All students must engage with the DDP which includes completing a training needs analysis to assess their training needs for their PhD or MD by publication registration period. It is compulsory for all students to complete the research, ethics and integrity training. Students can complete an Epigeum ethics course online or attend their faculty’s taught module. For the Epigeum course, click the ‘RIS-Research Integrity’ hyperlink which loads MOLE2. On logging in select the appropriate faculty and then start the course.
Submission

Registration for a PhD or MD by Publication will be for one year only. Candidates will be expected to submit during that year. Candidates who have transferred from a standard route to a Publication route will be expected to submit within one year of their date of transfer. Candidates are required to be members of staff for the full period of registration. Submission should conform to the appropriate regulations for PhD by Publication or MD by Publication. Candidates will be required to pay a fee on submission.

The important consideration for examiners will be that the published work shows convincing evidence of the capacity of the candidate to pursue research and scholarship and make an original contribution and substantial addition to knowledge. Thus the proper constraints on the number of published works are that they form a substantial and yet coherent whole. To this end, and in addition to the published works, a commentary (not exceeding 15,000 words in the case of PhD and not exceeding 10,000 words in the case of MD) should be submitted which links the submitted works and outlines their coherence and significance. In most cases it is unlikely that a small number of publications will be sufficiently substantial or that a large number would be adequately coherent. Whilst there are no specific regulations regarding the number of publications that should be submitted, it is expected that most submissions will include between 3 and 8 publications.

As with standard PhD or MD submission, three copies of the thesis must be submitted. These should be bound using the University Print Service’s binding service. As with standard PhD or MD submission, candidates will be required to submit the final copy of their thesis in electronic format. The candidate should ensure that they have retained copyright from the original publishers or sought permission to include any and all published works in the e-Thesis. A copyright statement for each publication should be submitted to that effect. Most journals will allow inclusion of the last pre-print peer-reviewed version of the article. If any papers have multiple authors, the candidate will also need to obtain the permission of co-authors before they can be incorporated into the e-Thesis.

Turnitin will identify any previous publication of the text in a journal or conference paper in the originality report. If you have retained the right to publish the article and obtained the necessary permissions from publishers and co-authors, this match can be excluded from the results.

If any of the above conditions cannot be met i.e. the publishers or a co-author does not give the necessary permission then the e-Thesis cannot be accepted. The Regulations for PhD or MD by Publication state that the award of any qualification shall be withheld until an electronic copy is submitted and accepted. Given the multitude of reasons for the possible failure to gain the necessary permissions, instances where permission cannot be secured will be handled on a case-by-case basis.

Possible outcomes

The Examiners may make one of the following decisions:

1. Pass
2. Minor Amendments and/or further oral examination
3. Fail

Any minor amendments will be to the commentary (the published works cannot be altered). In the event of a fail there is no option to re-submit with the same set of papers. Any resubmission should conform to the Regulations for PhD or MD by Publication.