



University of
St Andrews

PhD by portfolio of published work (student route)

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Purpose	Lays out the requirements and processes for students wishing to submit a portfolio of works prepared for publication in lieu of a thesis.

Version number	Purpose / changes	Document status	Author of changes, role and school / unit	Date
1.0	New policy	Approved	Emily Feamster, Deputy Head of Education	01/08/2023

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1. Purpose

This policy sets out the rules and procedures for postgraduate research students who wish to submit a portfolio of publications instead of a thesis for examination for a doctoral degree. University staff who wish to submit a portfolio of published work for examination for a doctoral degree, without a corresponding period of enrolment as a doctoral student, should see the staff policy for [PhD by portfolio of published work \(staff route\)](#).

2. Eligibility

Matriculated students studying for a doctoral degree at St Andrews can request permission to submit a portfolio of work which has been published or prepared for publication, instead of a thesis. The standard required for a portfolio is the same as that for a thesis. A portfolio must therefore represent a significant and original contribution to knowledge or understanding consistent with what may reasonably be expected of a diligent student after three years of full-time study. It should be clearly written, well-argued and should indicate a satisfactory knowledge of the field of study.

A student must be able to demonstrate that they have, or are very likely to have, at least two high quality, peer reviewed publications at the time of application (requirements at point of submission detailed [below](#)). All research included in the portfolio must be done during the period of registration as a doctoral student at St Andrews. Research and publications produced outside the period of doctoral registration will not be permitted in the portfolio. The normal rules laid out in the [Length of studies and associated fees for postgraduate research students](#) policy still apply.

3. Application process

A request to change submission format can be made after at least one year of full-time equivalent study. The latest a request can be made is the point at which the student completes their 'intention to submit' form, or 6 months prior to the submission deadline, whichever comes first. Students will not normally be allowed to switch back to a thesis submission after having been approved to submit a portfolio, so it is important that both student and supervisor agree that the student is likely to meet the submission requirements before requesting a switch.

Students interested in submitting a portfolio should discuss it with their supervisor in the first instance. If both student and supervisor agree that a portfolio of publications is a viable and beneficial route for the student, the supervisor should write to the DoPGR with:

- A brief statement explaining why they support the student's request to move to a portfolio submission.
- The status of any items submitted for peer-reviewed publication (eg, submitted, revise and resubmit, accepted)
- Plans for further publications, including thoughts about which peer reviewed publications would be a good fit for the work and a likely timeline for submission
- Information on the quality of the confirmed or likely journals or publishers, if necessary

The DoPGR should then review the request and either approve, decline, or advise that the request can be reconsidered at a later point if the student improves their publication record. The DoPGR may consult the Associate Provost Students, if necessary, when assessing a

student's request to move to a portfolio submission. If a request to submit a portfolio is approved, the DoPGR will notify Registry so that the change can be recorded on the student record.

The normal policies and procedures for postgraduate research students will continue to apply to students who have been approved to submit a portfolio.

4. Submission requirements

Students should have at least 50% of the material published or under review at the time of submission. At a minimum, this could be:

- Two papers submitted to peer-reviewed publications, at least one of which has been accepted (i.e. an editor's letter of acceptance received)
- One further paper (or papers) in a less final form, e.g. an internal discussion paper, or a manuscript in preparation for submission.

The student must be the first author, or primary contributor, of the publications and this should be clearly evidenced in the journal author statements. If contributions from multiple authors and/or researchers are included in the submission, the candidate must acknowledge the contributions of others and indicate the level of contribution in the three critical areas of conception, execution, and writing.

In addition to the papers prepared for publication, the portfolio must include appropriate introductory text and a critical discussion summarising the aims, objectives, methodology, results and conclusions covered in the portfolio. The critical discussion should indicate how the publications form a coherent body of work, what contributions the candidate has made to this work, and how the work contributes significantly to the expansion of knowledge. The critical discussion will normally be between 10,000 and 25,000 words. Portfolio submissions, including introductory text and critical discussion, are subject to the same word limits as thesis submissions.

5. Examination

The examination of a portfolio will follow the procedures set out in the [Assessment of postgraduate research students](#) policy although the School may request that the examining committee consists of an internal convenor and two external examiners.

Although containing material worthy of publication in some form is one of the required standards for a doctoral submission, the acceptance of a paper or article for publication in a peer-reviewed journal does not predetermine the outcome of the examination of a portfolio. This means that examiners can request changes and additions to the portfolio and can award the full range of viva outcomes outlined in the [Postgraduate Senate Regulations](#).

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