PhD by Publication Policy

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RCSI/NUI PhD Degrees in RCSI

Introduction

In RCSI there are currently 3 routes to a PhD degree. These are:

1) PhD By Classical route (a): by Research, Thesis and Viva Voce Examination whereby candidates register for 3 or 4 years full-time (6 or more years part-time), focus on research under a designated supervisor(s) and produce a substantial original thesis, culminating in a viva voce (oral) examination. Published work may be appended to the thesis. This route is being phased out and replaced with route (b), to ensure that all candidates have access to structured training modules.

2) PhD By Classical route (b): by Research, Taught modules, Thesis and Viva Voce Examination. Since 2002, structured Taught Modules have been made available for PhD candidates to enable efficient and appropriate PhD training in select relevant topics. Candidates complete a minimum number of structured modules (15 ECTS), usually in their first year, and also complete their Research, Thesis and Viva Voce Examination as described in 1) above.


The thesis presentation guidelines are identical for both types of thesis and can be found here: http://www.rcsi.ie/files/SchoolofPGStudies/20160330012419_RCSI-Thesis-Presentation-Regul.pdf

Thesis examination guidelines are found here: http://www.rcsi.ie/files/SchoolofPGStudies/docs/20170710020717_RCSI-PhD-Examination-Regulatio.pdf

3) From 2019, a third route is available: PhD by Publication. The process is described below. This route is an alternative to (not a replacement for) the above routes. For the PhD by Publication, the guidelines for preparation of the doctorate thesis will differ from above, but all other elements of student registration, progression and examination will remain the same. Guidelines for thesis preparation and submission are available here
RCSI/NUI PhD Degree by Publication for RCSI Postgraduate Candidates

Guide for eligibility

Candidates who are in their third or subsequent year on the RCSI PhD register are eligible to apply to be examined by this route. A guide for eligibility is that candidates should have published papers or have papers accepted for publication during their time on the RCSI PhD register, in journals ranked in the first or second quartiles (Q1 or Q2) in their respective fields. Journal Quartile rankings are obtained from the Scopus journal rank tool: http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php.

To be eligible for consideration for a PhD by publication, candidates should:

- be 1st author on 2 papers (already published or accepted) in quality peer-reviewed journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in the relevant field and
- be a co-author on 1-2 further papers (already published or accepted) in quality peer-reviewed journals ranked Q1 or Q2 in the relevant field

OR

- have authorship status deemed by the PhD by Publication Dissertation Committee and subsequently by the external and internal examiners to be at least equivalent to the above.'

In exceptional circumstances e.g. if a student is 1st author on a paper in a very highly ranked journal such as Nature, the PhD by Publication Dissertation Committee may allow consideration of a PhD submission containing fewer than the above number of publications.

Application for Examination

- Submission for PhD examination may normally be made following a minimum of 3 years' registration on the RCSI PhD Register. As with the standard PhD thesis, candidates must complete their theses within 6 years (full time) or 8 years (part time).

- Approximately 6 months in advance of the date they expect to submit their theses for examination, candidates should submit a completed RCSI PhD Thesis completion Plan (http://staff.rcsi.ie/faculty-and-departments/spgs/thesis/phd). An option will be available to select (1) "Thesis examination by classical pathway" or (2) "Thesis examination by publication". If selecting option (2), candidates will need to submit details of the published or accepted work including the Quartile rankings of the journals in which the work has been/is to be published, see http://www.scimagojr.com/journalrank.php. This plan needs to be countersigned by the candidate’s supervisor and submitted to the PhD by Publication Dissertation Committee.

The dissertation Committee will be comprised of a member of the SPGS academic team, the head of department or Head of School in which the PhD candidate completed most of their work and the primary PhD supervisor of the candidate.
The supervisor should submit examiner nominations at this time, in an identical manner as for the PhD by classical pathway.

**Consideration Process**

Following receipt of the completed RCSI PhD Thesis Completion Plan, the *PhD by Publication* Dissertation Committee, after due consultation, informs candidates whether the calibre of their research publications is sufficient for consideration for the PhD by publication route. They then recommend for appointment a suitably qualified PhD External Examiner, a suitably qualified PhD Internal Examiner and a suitable Chairperson, according to the RCSI Guidelines for these appointments.

**Thesis Format and Eligibility**

Candidates are required to submit 3 soft-bound copies of the work to be assessed.

The published papers cannot alone constitute the thesis; there must be a narrative description of the work that connects the publications, producing a cohesive, unitary dissertation, documenting a single program of research, completed by the candidate while registered for a PhD degree.

A doctoral candidate must indicate their department at RCSI as their address on each scientific article they publish.

**a) Thesis Structure:**

The structure for a thesis submitted for examination as a PhD by publication must conform to the following:

(i) a title,

(ii) an acknowledgement,

(iii) a 300-350 word abstract of the work submitted,

(iv) a list of papers for consideration, stating whether already published/accepted for publication; giving journal impact factors, quartiles for the relevant field and citation metrics, if available.

(v) an introductory chapter of 3500-4000 words, with the appropriate bibliography outlining the background to the work, the contribution of the work to original knowledge in the relevant field; the relationship between the pieces of work presented;

(vi) copies of the papers, one per chapter, complete with their published bibliography, with a written statement on the contribution of the candidate to the work described and to the authorship of each paper.

(vii) In the case of papers with multiple authors, candidates must clearly identify how much of the work is theirs and what portion is carried out by others. A separate cover letter from the candidate's supervisor confirming the accuracy of these estimates may also be required.

(viii) a final chapter describing overall conclusions. This should also summarize how the objectives of the research were met in each of the articles included.

(ix) A single bibliography summarizing all the citations referred to in the narrative part of the thesis.

**b) Supplementary appendices:**

Appendices describing useful information not covered in the publications e.g. data collection and analysis, experimental work etc. must be included. These are intended to help future researchers in the field.
c) **Thesis Presentation**

Just as in the classical PhD thesis format, the thesis must be presented as a unified whole with respect to font size, line spacing, margin sizes, section headings, index and page numbers. However the bibliography contained in the published papers does not need to be reproduced in the final thesis bibliography unless the citations are mentioned in the narrative part of the thesis. The thesis must conform to all other requirements (and in line with RCSI Thesis Guidelines): [http://www.rcsi.ie/files/SchoolofPGStudies/20140915023809_RCSI%20Thesis%20Presentation%20Regul.pdf](http://www.rcsi.ie/files/SchoolofPGStudies/20140915023809_RCSI%20Thesis%20Presentation%20Regul.pdf)

The PhD by published work thesis will be judged by the examiners as a unified, logically-coherent document in the same way a traditional thesis is judged. Publication or acceptance for publication of research results before presentation of the thesis in no way supersedes RCSI’s evaluation and judgment of the work during the thesis examination process (i.e. it does not guarantee that the thesis will be found acceptable for the degree).


d) **Third-Party Copyright**

Candidates must identify all material in their theses that is subject to third party copyright. Material subject to third-party copyright includes, for example, diagrams, tables, figures created by another author and inserted in the thesis to illustrate an argument. Candidates will need to obtain permission from the copyright owner to include this material in their theses before it is published online. Candidates should seek such permissions in good time, and well in advance of final submission.

A copy of the final, approved thesis must be uploaded to the RCSI Institutional Repository, [https://epubs.rcsi.ie/theses_dissertations/](https://epubs.rcsi.ie/theses_dissertations/). A version of the published papers should be uploaded to the Repository as they are published, subject to publisher copyright policies. Within the thesis upload, to avoid a breach of third-party copyright, the published papers will be provided as a weblink. This can be a reference to the e-publications@RCSI record, the DOI, or the published journal web address for the article. All other components of the thesis, (title, acknowledgements, introduction, written statements for each publication, discussion, bibliography, supplementary appendices) must be submitted within the upload. Help and advice on publisher permissions and uploading is available from epubs@rcsi.ie and the library.

**Examination Process**

All elements of the thesis examination follow the same processes as are used for the classical PhD examination as follows:

Each Examinee must declare any conflict of interest with the examination process on the appropriate RCSI examination conflict of interest form. In the case of PhD by Publication, being an Editor of a journal in which the student has published must be listed as a Conflict of Interest.

- Pending their informal acceptances, the Examinees are formally appointed to their respective roles by RCSI.
- The examiners are then sent print copies of the Candidate’s submission for examination.
- The School of Postgraduate Studies interacts with the external and internal Examinees, the chairperson, the supervisor and the candidate, to arrange a suitable date and venue for the *viva voce* examination.
- Examinees’ reports on the work submitted must be submitted to the RCSI School of Postgraduate Studies Office at least one week before the date of the *viva voce* examination
- The *viva voce* examination is conducted according to RCSI Guidelines.

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2 The published PhD guidelines will be updated to accommodate the option to present a thesis for examination as a collection of published papers and to establish the requirements thereof.
Following the viva voce examination, the examiners prepare a joint report and make a recommendation regarding the application outcome according to the RCSI Guidelines.

If required, the candidate carries out amendments to the work presented to the satisfaction of the internal examiner or the external examiner as agreed.

Confirmation that this has been carried out satisfactorily must be made by the internal or external examiner or both, as agreed.

The work must then be presented in hard-bound copy and electronic form according to RCSI regulations and uploaded to the RCSI Library epub site: [https://epubs.rcsi.ie/theses_dissertations/](https://epubs.rcsi.ie/theses_dissertations/)

The candidate’s name is included in the next RCSI Higher Degrees by Research graduation list.

**Examination Boards and Graduation**

As per the classical PhD examination route, when all reports have been submitted by the viva-voce chairperson to the School of Postgraduate Studies, the Postgraduate Programmes Manager writes to the candidate informing him/her of the recommendation.

Copies of all three examiner reports are included with the letter, which outlines the next steps including the deadline for submission of a revised thesis.

If minor corrections are required, the internal examiner must approve these; in the case of major corrections or a referral, both examiners must approve the corrected thesis.

Examiners submit their approval in writing (by email) to the School of Postgraduate Studies postgraduateschool@rcsi.ie.

Regardless of the level of corrections required, each candidate has one opportunity to implement all required corrections in the revised thesis. Failure to implement corrections to the satisfaction of the examiner(s) will result in the degree not being awarded.

When the thesis has been approved, the candidate submits one hard bound copy to the School of Postgraduate Studies and one PDF version for inclusion in the RCSI repository. The School of Postgraduate Studies makes the necessary arrangements for approval of the examiners’ recommendation at the relevant Examination Boards and for the candidate to graduate at the next available RCSI conferring. The degree conferred is awarded by RCSI and NUI.

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