

PhD by Prospective Publication Guidance

1. Definition & General Principle

A PhD by Prospective Publication is an alternative route to doctoral qualification by major thesis. It involves the preparation and submission of a thesis containing submitted or published articles (in peer-reviewed academic journals or professional equivalent) published within the period of registration at City, University of London. Work published prior to entering the programme is not eligible for examination as part of the PhD by Prospective publication. For the avoidance of doubt, candidates who have published work prior to joining the institution could consider the PhD by Prior Publication route.

This document outlines the main guidelines that should be followed when considering a PhD by Prospective Publication. However, each application will be considered individually by the School in which the candidate is based.

2. Criteria for Admission to the Degree

- The PhD via prospective publication route is open to registered students and staff who declare this route when applying and where the discipline supports it;
- The entrance requirements are the same as for those carrying out a PhD via major thesis;
- Applications for this route must be scrutinised and recommended by School Research Degrees Programmes Committee to the Doctoral College Board of Studies for approval;
- The application should include a plan for a related and coherent series of projects that will lead to the publications included in the thesis.

3. Criteria for Assessment

The candidate must demonstrate that they meet the requirements described in the [UK Quality Code](#) for Higher Education (section 4.18). These state that doctoral degrees will be awarded to candidates who have demonstrated:

- a) the creation and interpretation of new knowledge, through original research or other advanced scholarship, of a quality to satisfy peer review, extend the forefront of the discipline, and merit publication;
- b) a systematic acquisition and understanding of a substantial body of knowledge which is at the forefront of an academic discipline or area of professional practice;
- c) the general ability to conceptualise, design and implement a project for the generation of new knowledge, applications or understanding at the forefront of the discipline, and to adjust the project design in the light of unforeseen problems;
- d) a detailed understanding of applicable techniques for research and advanced academic enquiry.

For a PhD via prospective publication, the thesis will normally include between 3 and 6 articles that have been published, or submitted for publication, in a peer-reviewed journal (the exact number will vary by discipline and local guidance should be followed). Journals used should be considered of good quality within the relevant discipline. Candidates will need to include an introductory chapter that sets the scene and justifies why the included publications constitute a coherent whole and that there is an overarching hypothesis to

the thesis. To meet the requirement in (b) above, it may be necessary to include a substantive literature chapter if there isn't a published literature review or systematic review. It is also important that candidates include author contribution statements using the convention for their discipline e.g. the CRediT taxonomy ([CRediT \(wiley.com\)](https://www.wiley.com)). Candidates should also consider if inclusion of supplementary material could help elaborate any gaps in the included articles.

4. Advantages

- a) Students build a publication record during the PhD supporting their future career;
- b) Students learn about academic writing for publication;
- c) Most of the content of the thesis will already have been peer reviewed;
- d) Students may find that the external peer review process provides reassurance and therefore they feel more confident entering the viva;

5. Disadvantages

- a) Some journals in certain disciplines limit word length making it harder to demonstrate fully the descriptors for the award of a doctorate;
- b) Peer review is by nature subjective. It is possible examiners may take a different view of some of the work in the thesis.
- c) The publication process can be slow and this can affect particularly full-time students;
- d) Examiners may not be familiar with the format of a prospective publication thesis. Schools should develop guidance notes, which are discipline specific, to support examiners;

6. Related Policies

The PhD by Prospective publication guidelines policy should be read in conjunction with the policies below.

Intellectual Property policy	Senate Regulation 24
Registration of a Research Degree Student policy	Senate Regulation 25
Research Degrees Framework	

Policy Title	
PhD by Prospective Publication Guidance	
Policy Enabling Owner and Department	Responsible for Implementation and Department
Doctoral College	School Research Degrees Programme Committees Doctoral College Board of Studies
Approving Body	Date of Approval
City Doctoral College Board of Studies	
Last Reviewed	Review Due Date
N/A	November 2026
Publication of Policy (<i>tick as appropriate</i>)	
For public access online (internet)? <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	For staff access only (intranet)? <input type="checkbox"/>
Queries about this policy should be referred to	
Doctoral College, doctoralcollege@city.ac.uk	

