

# Research Degree Regulations Schedule D

PhD by Publication

**01 October 2024 – 30 September 2025**



Edge Hill  
University

# Research Degree Regulations Schedule D

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## Preamble

The University's general academic and research degree regulations apply unless these specific PhD by Publication regulations define otherwise.

The term 'PhD by Publication' describes the route that a candidate takes to reach the examination for a PhD but does not in any way imply different learning outcomes.

Thus:

*The Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) is awarded to a candidate who ... has critically investigated and evaluated an approved topic, resulting in an independent, significant and original contribution to knowledge, and having demonstrated an understanding of research methodology appropriate to the field of study, has presented and defended a thesis, by oral examination (or approved alternative), to the satisfaction of the appointed examiners.<sup>1</sup>*

The distinctiveness of the route is that the resulting thesis/dissertation comprises a coherent portfolio of both the candidate's published work and an associated analytical commentary, which identifies the candidate's original contribution to knowledge. The formal examination of the published work and analytical commentary is in the form of a viva, in exactly the same manner as for candidates who have submitted a single dissertation.

## Stages of Candidature

The defining feature of this route to PhD is that the prospective candidate has already conducted research, and the outcomes have been made available in the public domain. The University takes a view on the appropriateness of the prospective candidate's publications using a staged approach:

- Stage 1: Establishing the prima facie case
- Stage 2: Production of the analytical commentary and portfolio
- Stage 3: Assessment by viva

Prospective candidates' research will not have been conducted primarily for consideration for the award of a PhD. It is thus not appropriate to consider prospective candidates, or to register them, as students or postgraduate researchers (PGRs) of the University. They will, however, be registered as candidates for the award at the point of submission and prior to oral examination.

The first stage may be regarded as a speculative enquiry, which aims to establish whether the research outputs might make sufficient contribution to warrant assessment for a PhD. The Graduate School Board of Studies takes formal advice

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<sup>1</sup> Drawn from N2.1 in the Research Degree Regulations.

from an external peer subject advisor before considering whether or not to approve progression to the second stage.

It is during the second stage that prospective candidates make the detailed case regarding the coherence and originality of their published work. The submission of an analytical commentary and portfolio of work marks the point at which candidature is formally recognised by the Graduate School Board of Studies, with the appointment of the final PhD viva panel.

PhD by publication candidates are never students or PGRs, and, as a consequence, candidates have no entitlement to University resources afforded to students or PGRs at any point in the process, and the University has no obligation to provide such resources.

## Eligibility

Open applications from the general public are not accepted; eligibility is limited to current EHU staff, and also to previous staff who conducted the majority of their research<sup>2</sup> whilst in post at Edge Hill. In addition, staff on fractional and Associate Tutor contracts who are making a substantial contribution<sup>3</sup> to the academic life of the University should be permitted to submit themselves for assessment.

Prospective candidates would normally have been working and researching at the University for in excess of two years before consideration of a *prima facie* case could be made.

Publications should normally be in English, although exceptions to this may be permitted in appropriate cases. In such exceptional cases it is essential that members of the viva team and the external advisor must be able to read and judge the publications in the language in which they have been written.<sup>4</sup> The submission of the *prima facie* case and the analytical commentary must be in English.

In order that currency and originality be maintained, a normal maximum of 10 years should be allowed between the publication of the first paper and submission of the portfolio.

The University will only accept applications in discipline areas where it has identifiable subject and research expertise. The minimum requirement is that the University is able to identify an internal examiner for the PhD viva.

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<sup>2</sup> Publications that are being considered for assessment for a PhD.

<sup>3</sup> Academic Board directed that the criterion of 'making a substantial contribution to the academic life of the University' (rather than a specific number of weekly hours worked) is a helpful concept, which should form the deciding criterion to be considered by the Graduate School Board of Studies when applying its discretion in considering a candidate's eligibility.

<sup>4</sup> Exceptionally, the candidate might be permitted to provide certified translations of the material.

Prospective candidates must have the written support<sup>5</sup> of their Head of Department, or in the case of previous staff, the head of the currently most appropriate department.

## Stage 1: Establishing the prima facie case

Candidates must submit their proposed portfolio of publications, accompanied by a short commentary (approx. 2-3000 words), which briefly demonstrates the coherence of the work, highlights the personal contribution of the candidate and points to evidence that the work holistically constitutes an original contribution to knowledge. In particular:

- i. The proposal must identify and evidence the candidate's personal contribution when submitting multiple-authored papers as part of the portfolio.<sup>6</sup>
- ii. Acceptability of publications.<sup>7</sup> It is acknowledged that the impact of publications varies from discipline area to area. It is usual for 'publications' to include, amongst others, peer reviewed journal articles, monographs, chapters in edited books, and various combinations of these. The decision on acceptability will be made by the Graduate School Board of Studies, taking advice from subject staff and an external specialist subject advisor.
- iii. Number of papers. Typically 6-8 journal articles (or equivalent) is an appropriate volume of published work. The external advisor will recognise that it is the holistic contribution to knowledge that is being assessed, and that the threshold cannot simply be considered as achieving a minimum quantum of publication. The final academic judgement regarding eligibility will be made at the point of consideration by the Graduate School Board of Studies, informed by advice from subject staff and an external advisor.
- iv. Performance-related/creative practice-related doctorates by publication. Since the performance or created artefacts do not in themselves necessarily demonstrate the research skills required to complete a doctorate, the evidence and work must together demonstrate that the candidate is a researcher, not just a very capable practitioner. The principle is that the University will accept candidates offering performance (and other practice-

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<sup>5</sup> Which provides the initial internal discipline-level evaluation of the originality and contribution to knowledge.

<sup>6</sup> The burden of proof would lie with the candidate, but it is generally anticipated that written 'affidavits' from co-authors, in support of a written explanation/justification from the candidate, would be presented.

<sup>7</sup> In cases where unpublished peer-reviewed research reports contribute to the body of knowledge, and their impact has been independently verified (e.g., where national security or commercial sensitivity may have precluded general publication), it may exceptionally be possible for arrangements to be made for assessment for a PhD by Publication. Early discussions with the Graduate School would be necessary before any significant preparatory work was undertaken. It must be accepted, however, that the term 'body of knowledge' implies accessibility, and that those involved in the assessment would have to have guaranteed access to the work.

related creative material) as research, provided appropriate records of the performance (or other output) are available and substantive contemporaneous and reflective notes had been maintained by the candidate.

- v. Self-plagiarism. Candidates will not be permitted to submit work used for (or drawn from) the award of a degree elsewhere. This excludes the use of MRes/MPhil/PhD dissertations as publications, also excludes the use of papers drawn from that research (i.e., no double counting) but would accept the development of that work into new areas.

## Faculty Mentor

The portfolio of publications and accompanying commentary must also be accompanied by a statement of academic support from the 'host' faculty. The faculty is required to identify an advisor/mentor to the candidate during the development of the portfolio, such that the supporting statement is appropriately informed. The mentor's appointment will be noted by the Graduate School Board of Studies. In some cases the mentor will be an internal member of staff; in others it will be an external appointment. The University permits either, in order to enable the best possible advice to be available to the prospective candidate. The mentor should meet all the standard EHU criteria for appointment as a PhD supervisor, have supervised to successful completion, and preferably be an experienced PhD examiner.

If a candidate chooses to have an external mentor, the University has no responsibility to provide mentoring or advice on academic matters to the candidate. The University will, however, advise on matters of process.

The specialist subject external advisor: The decision regarding the acceptability of the *prima facie* case will be made by the Graduate School Board of Studies, informed by written advice from an external subject specialist who advises whether or not the corpus of publications appears to contribute an original contribution to knowledge appropriate to be recognised by the award of a PhD.

The external advisor should, in all respects, be appointable as a final PhD viva external examiner in the discipline, in order to bring the appropriate rigour to scrutiny of the work. Wherever possible the external advisor will also act as one of the two external panel members on the final viva

The external specialist's advice should also indicate the potential content/direction of the analytical commentary, or alternatively identify where lacunae in the work mean that the *prima facie* case has not been made. In such a scenario, feedback identifying the shortfalls will be provided by the external, and a re-application would be accepted at a later date.

In exceptional cases where the external advisor feels unable to make a clear recommendation regarding the acceptability of the application, the Graduate School

will, where possible, appoint a new advisor. Where it is not possible to appoint a new advisor an application will be rejected on the grounds that the University is unable to draw on sufficient expertise to assess the work.

Acceptance of the prima facie case: The final decision whether or not to accept the prima facie case will be taken by the Graduate School Board of Studies, informed by the faculty's supporting statement, by the external advisor's report, and where considered necessary, by a report from a Registration Panel.

If the case is not accepted, prospective candidates may make further submissions, informed by the advice from the specialist external advisor. Any further submission must be substantively different from any previous submissions.

## **Stage 2: The analytical commentary and portfolio**

When the Graduate School Board of Studies accepts that a prima facie case has been successfully made, it does so acknowledging that the primary research is complete (and indeed published).

The pre-examination period will thus only be for writing the analytical commentary. No subsequent research will be accepted as part of the submission.

The pre-examination period is limited to a maximum of 18 months. Failure to submit within 18 months will be treated as a failure to submit by the end of a maximum period of registration, which means that no submission will be permitted for a period of three years. Candidates can, however, apply to the Graduate School Board of Studies for an extension to the pre-examination period. Normally, such applications will have to be received prior to the deadline, although, in extreme cases, exceptions to that requirement will be permitted. As with all extension requests, the candidate will be required to make the case for granting an extension; there is no right to an extension on request.

The analytical commentary: the analytical commentary is to weave the 'corpus of publications' together into a coherent whole, to identify timeliness and contribution to knowledge, and to identify the relationship to existing research/knowledge. In particular the analytical commentary must reaffirm<sup>8</sup> the candidate's contribution when s/he submits multiple-authored papers as part of the portfolio.

The analytical commentary should not exceed 12,000 words.

The final submission should comprise the analytical commentary and copies of the original publications (as they appeared in press), bound into a single document. This forms the final post-examination document lodged with the University. Any copyright

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<sup>8</sup> It is anticipated that written confirmation from joint authors will be the normal manner in which the candidate's contribution will be confirmed.

issues must be addressed during the writing of the analytical commentary, and clearance bound within the submission.

### Stage 3: Assessment by viva

Unless identified in these regulations, there is no difference between the examination for this route and for the standard route to a PhD.

The University will not charge registration or examination fees for current staff. For previous staff, a fee may be charged.

The criteria for an award are as already defined in section N2.1 above.

Since candidates will be EHU/ex-EHU staff, then the viva team will comprise two external examiners, one internal examiner and an independent internal chair. In the specific case of PhDs by publication, the University will permit the previously used specialist external advisor as one of the external examiners. The mentor cannot act as an examiner.

## Judgements

The following recommendations are available to the examiners:

- i. that the candidate be awarded the degree;
- ii. that the candidate be awarded the degree subject to minor amendments being made to the analytical commentary,<sup>9</sup> with the amended analytical commentary and associated portfolio of publications being submitted no later than twelve weeks from the date of receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the candidate, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required. The internal examiner will confirm that any amendments have been made. Confirmation of the amendments having been made shall constitute a recommendation to the Graduate School Board of Studies that the candidate be awarded the degree;
- iii. that no award is made. The candidate may choose to be re-examined for the degree, with a new submission after a minimum period of three years has elapsed.<sup>10</sup>
- iv. that the candidate be awarded an MPhil with or without amendments being made to the analytical commentary, with the amended paper and the original portfolio of publications being submitted by a specified date and no later than twelve weeks from the date of the receipt of guidance from the examining team. The examiners will provide written guidance to the candidate, via the Graduate School, on what amendments and corrections are required;
- v. that the candidate be considered under the University's malpractice regulations.

## Research ethics considerations

Since the research will normally have already been completed and published, specific research ethics approval will not be required.

The research methodology, methods and the allied approach to ethics, however, would be explored in the analytical commentary and the viva.

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<sup>9</sup> Clearly, corrections cannot be made to papers that have already been published.

<sup>10</sup> Thus permitting time for new publications to be included.

## Endmatter

| Information      | Ownership/Review                                |
|------------------|-------------------------------------------------|
| Title            | Research Degree Regulations, Schedule D         |
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| Approved by      | Academic Board                                  |
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