

Making Your Doctoral Thesis Open through the VRE

All doctoral researchers must deposit a copy of the final thesis (PhD, MPhil or PhD by Published Work) to WestminsterResearch, the University's institutional repository before you graduate.

Preparing Your Document

Other People's Work

It is highly probable that your thesis will contain material for which you don't hold the copyright, this may include, but is not limited to:

- quotations, such as passages of text or music
- images, such as photographs, maps, charts or graphs

There are many ways you can legally incorporate limited amounts: However, if you have used such third party material, you need to:

- check if the [copyright has expired](#); or
- check if there is a clear statement that the work can be used under [a Creative Commons licence](#); or
- determine that the use of the material falls within the description of 'fair dealing' under UK law; or
- get the [permission of the rights holders](#) to include their content, for example the author, photographer or publisher.

The [Copyright for Researchers](#) guide gives information on the use of such material, but in no way substitutes for formal legal advice. If you are in any doubt or require further information we recommend you consult the sources of further advice at the end of the guide.

Fair Dealing

Researchers will often need to copy works protected by copyright and this may be permitted under the law through what are known as 'copyright exceptions'. These are circumstances when using a copyright work does not require permission of the rightsholder. Check the [Copyright for Researchers](#) guide, or the [Government guidance](#), for more information on Fair Dealing.

If you carry out these checks and record your findings as you gather your material, and do not leave it until you near completion, it will be far easier. An editable checklist to record all uses of other people's work, is available as a document here:

<https://www.westminster.ac.uk/sites/default/public-files/general-documents/westminster-third-party-copyright-checklist.docx>

This helps justify and record your decisions should there be any query once your thesis is made public.

If none of these apply and you can't get permission, you will need to create a redacted version of the thesis with the relevant sections removed, for public display. You will also submit a complete copy of your thesis to the VRE, which will remain under closed access.

Redaction

You may need to redact parts of your thesis if it contains third party copyright, which you are unable to include (see above).

See Research Degree Handbook for details on redaction of sensitive and confidential material via an embargo: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic-programme>

Creating a redacted version

Redaction may be necessary if your theses contains material that you should not make openly available. You can block out individual sentences or paragraphs or remove images or sections.

To redact:

- Delete all restricted information and replace it with the text string [REDACTED]. This way, redaction is apparent, but the space can't be used to identify the missing information.
- Don't leave text concealed behind black highlighting, readers may be able to reveal the hidden text.
- Don't delete the reference to the content you have removed.
- To redact images or large sections, delete them and replace them with [REDACTED]. You may need to add blank pages, or sections, to keep page numbering the same. You may wish to link to the removed material if it is legally available elsewhere.

Embargoes

Temporary or permanent embargoes are not routinely given and are only permitted in very limited circumstances For further information please email: graduateschool@westminster.ac.uk who can guide on applying for an Embargo and talk to your Director of Studies.

Supplementary Data or Files

If you have data, diagrams, maps, multimedia items or any other documents you can't incorporate into the body of your thesis, but wish to include alongside the record for your thesis in the VRE, please indicate this to the Graduate School Registry, and provide them with an email address that the Repository Team can contact you on, to obtain the files, and discuss the access levels you would like applied. You have the option as to whether you make these files open alongside the thesis or keep them closed.

PhD by Published Work

To include a PhD by published work:

We will create a single record for your thesis which includes a basic record of the thesis alongside the commentary. If permitted by the publisher/s of the work/s, or they are made available under an open access licence (often Creative Commons), your thesis itself may include the publications, but this often is not permitted. It should include a bibliographic list of the publications.

Additionally, you should supply copies of the publications that form the basis of the award. If these are available as e-copies please supply them.

Making Your Thesis Accessible

- make sure key pictures, charts, and diagrams have alternative text descriptions where appropriate
- use the [Microsoft Office Accessibility Checker](#)
- when exporting documents to pdf, follow [accessible pdf guidance](#)

Decisions you need to make

You need to decide:

- If you need to deposit a redacted version of your thesis as well as the full version.
- If you need to apply for an embargo, please see the Research Degree Handbook: <https://www.westminster.ac.uk/research/graduate-school/academic-programme>, or contact the Graduate School Registry after you have spoken to your Director of Studies.
- If your thesis contains a lot of confidential, or sensitive information, you may never be able to make it open. This will need to be agreed by making an Embargo request in advance of submission of your thesis. This will be reviewed by the Research Degree Progression Committee, and the Repository Team can enable closed records as agreed.
- Do you wish to register for an ORCID? This can then help link you to your thesis and any other research outputs you create. You can register through the VRE, or link if you have an existing ORCID. [ORCID](#) provides a persistent digital identifier that distinguishes you from every other researcher and supports automated linkages between you and your professional activities.

How Your Thesis is Added to WestminsterResearch

Upon completion you will be asked to sign a deposit agreement form and supply a copy of your final thesis. If you have been granted an embargo, or permission to include a redacted thesis, you will be given further guidance.

The Graduate School Registry will pass this to the Repository Team who will add it to the VRE, and then push the record out to the public repository, WestminsterResearch. If you have any queries, once it is 'live' please contact repository@westminster.ac.uk

The Benefits of Making Your research Open

Including your thesis in WestminsterResearch allows for rapid and open dissemination of your research across the globe, leading to greater visibility and providing the widest possible dissemination. The sharing of research publications and other outputs arising in academic contexts is seen as a public good.

Your thesis will also be shared through the British Library's [EThOS](#) service. EThOS is the UK's national thesis service which aims to maximise the visibility and availability of the UK's doctoral research theses.

It will not affect your ability to publish if you choose the right access option. Most publishers do not view open access to a thesis as prior publication. Please check with individual publishers as to their specific requirements.

Help

- VRE, WestminsterResearch and Open Access: repository@openaccess.ac.uk
- Copyright: <https://libguides.westminster.ac.uk/copyrightresearchers>
- Issues relating to embargoes and possible restrictions:
graduateschool@westminster.ac.uk