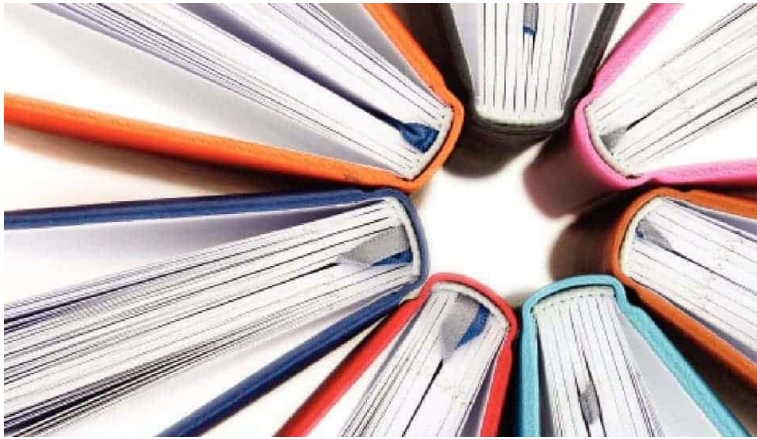


UNIVERSITY OF  
WESTMINSTER<sup>冊</sup>

# **Handbook for PhDs by Published Work**



**Graduate School  
2025-26**

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# Introduction

This handbook is for:

- applicants
- those currently registered for a PhD by Published Work
- supervisors
- admission tutors
- PhD co-ordinators
- external reviewers
- examiners.

The PhD by Published Work is an accelerated, part-time PhD award intended for those who have carried out extensive research over a significant period of time (although the published work cannot be older than 10 years at the point of application) and have publications, films, curated exhibitions, etc arising from this work which have already been published, exhibited, etc by peer-reviewed journals or by academic publishers and equivalents. Other kinds of 'published' work may also be eligible as part of a submission, depending on disciplinary area and the nature of the submission (see the section on Admissions below for more detail).

The final submission for a PhD by Published Work consists of a 15,000-word commentary (see section on the Commentary for more details) followed by the 'published' work which should be equivalent in length and research quality to a thesis submitted for a conventional PhD. Although the published research will often be separate bodies of work, it is important that they are connected along one research theme. The commentary works rather like the introductory chapter to a conventional PhD – it explains to the reader what is to follow, shows how what follows is linked and how it constitutes a coherent body of work, and sets out the significance of that work for the relevant discipline.

This route to PhD is suitable for researchers, artists, etc that have published, exhibited, etc, their work a lot in their career but have not followed the traditional PhD path and to those outside the academy who have published – or produced in other ways – work of equivalent research quality. The degree can help candidates gain recognition for their contributions to their research field and for them to show that the work they have done has been of a doctoral level without having to write a separate PhD thesis.

A PhD by Published Work is awarded following a viva (an oral examination) with both internal and external examiners, like the process of examination of a traditional PhD.

At the UoW, candidates for PhD by Published Work are always registered as part-time. The minimum registration period is one calendar year (12 months), and the maximum registration period is two calendar years (24 months). It is not possible to submit for a PhD by Published Work before the minimum registration period has been reached.

## Admissions

The admissions process for PhDs by Published Work is vastly different from that for conventional PhDs. The already 'published' work which the candidate includes as part of their application is the basis of the eventual decision on whether to award them a PhD or not. In effect, the admissions process for these applications constitutes a form of examination. Due to this, the published work needs to be assessed thoroughly during the admissions process. Every application must include copies, links, photographs, as evidence of the works which will form the basis of an eventual submission. The published work which forms the basis of all applications and will form the basis of the eventual submission needs to be assessed according to the two key selection criteria:

- 1     **Length of work:** the published work needs to add up to the word count of a conventional doctoral thesis in the relevant discipline. The commentary will be 15,000 words (with 10% leeway either way). As the length of the published works which form the basis of the application is one of the key entry criteria, candidates need to include information on the word counts of each piece in their application. In addition, if any of those works are co-authored, it is vital that applicants submit with their application details of the percentage of their own contribution for each.
- 2     **Research quality:** the quality of the published work which forms the basis of the application needs to be equivalent to that expected of a conventional thesis. This means that, for academic research, the work needs to have been published in peer-reviewed journals or by publishers who use the peer-review process. It is the case, however, that some applications will be from practitioners (for example, visual artists, curators, creative writers, architects, designers) and in these cases, the artefacts submitted as the basis of the application may not be conventional academic publications. They may be, for example, films, installations, novels, poetry, architectural models, musical recordings, and so forth. In these cases, the work should be assessed according to other criteria, such as the galleries where it has been exhibited, the publisher of the novel, and other relevant factors.

Both of these criteria need to be central to our internal admissions processes.

In addition to this, beginning in autumn 2024, an **external review** will need to be part of the admissions process for each application for a PhD by Published Work degree. Admissions tutors, in collaboration with the proposed Director of Studies, will identify a colleague at another institution or an appropriate person at a non-HEI organisation who will write a short (max. 600 words) review of the published work submitted which comments on its research quality (including comments on place of publication), its significance and its place within the relevant discipline. External reviewers will be paid an honorarium of £200.

As noted above, it may be the case that the work on which the application is based is other than academic journal articles, chapters or books. This is likely in areas where

experienced practitioners are applying – artists, curators, novelists or poets, musicians, architects, and so on. In the case of such applications, both our own internal admissions processes and the report of the external reviewer need to explicitly establish and assess the research quality of the work through the most appropriate criteria. If an artist has had solo shows in prestigious galleries and been exhibited internationally, or a novel has been published by one of the most significant literary publishers, for example, these would be evidence of appropriate research quality. However, the assessment of research quality needs to include the claims made for the significance of the work in the research proposal (see more below on the research proposal). If, for example, the submission is of genre fiction published by a non-literary publisher, but the proposal says that the commentary will be about the importance of the work based on its reception, its take up by fan forums, and its importance as a source in the creation of fan fiction, then the submissions and the proposal together would constitute a strong application. Similarly, the submission may consist of policy reports rather than academic writing, or a mixture of the two, and the acceptability or otherwise of this would depend on the claims being made and the approach taken in the commentary.

The published work is of course a key element in the decision of whether to make an offer to an applicant or not, but the **research proposal** is as important in this decision. However, again, the research proposal element for an application for a PhD by Published Work is quite different from the research proposal for an application for a conventional PhD. While the latter is concerned about work that will be done, the former is an account of the work that has already been produced. It is in many ways a shorter version of the commentary that will be written during the degree itself – it should describe the published work, explain how the various elements of it are linked together and form a coherent whole, and argue for its significance in relation to the appropriate discipline. The latter will involve engagement with other work in the field in order to situate the published work in relation to it. Detailed guidance can be found on [proposal requirements](#). Like the commentary, the proposal should conform to the academic conventions of its discipline.

Once the School has decided to make an offer to an applicant for a PhD by Published Work, the application will be sent by Admissions colleagues to the Research Degrees Progression Committee (RDPC) for approval. All applications for PhD by Published Work come go to RDPC, even if the applicant meets our standard entry criteria. This, like the external review, is an acknowledgement of the very different role of the admissions process for applications for these degrees.

## Supervision

Those registered for a PhD by Published Work should have access to supervisory support equivalent to that offered to a candidate for a conventional PhD. While the candidates are part time and of course are experienced in the area in which they have published, the aim of the supervision is to support their development and thinking while they consider their work as a whole and work to articulate its significance. While candidates may be very experienced in their research area, they, like candidates for conventional doctorates,

have not done a PhD before, and therefore needed to be supported throughout by experienced, accessible and sympathetic supervisors.

Candidates for PhD by Published Work do not have to have more than one supervisor, although it is possible for them to have more than two. If a candidate is assigned a Director of Studies and no second supervisors, the DoS should be an experienced supervisor and should preferably have had previous experience as part of a supervisory team supporting a PhD by Publication candidate.

Candidates for PhD by Published Work do not have any progression milestones (i.e. Annual Progress Reviews), but Director of Studies should make sure that candidates are progressing well through regular meetings and ensuring there are regular submissions of draft work.

The standard expectations of Directors of Studies and second supervisors as set out in the supervisor role descriptor (which can be found as an appendix in the [Handbook for Doctoral Supervisors](#)) apply also to the supervision of PhDs by Published Work.

Candidates for PhD by Published Work are part of the research community at the UoW, and it would be good for the Director of Studies to encourage candidates to take an active part in this when possible. It may be helpful, for example, to encourage them to present at school or research centre seminars and to be involved in Graduate School events and activities.

## The Commentary

The function of the commentary is to link the published work and to establish its coherence and significance. The commentary should not contain any new research. It should be a critical and analytical piece of work that follows the usual academic conventions in the relevant discipline.

As suggested above, a useful way of thinking about the commentary is that it has the function of the introductory chapter in a conventional thesis. It should tell the reader what is to come, how what follows is linked and provides an integrated and coherent original contribution to knowledge, and how it relates to existing work in the field.

The maximum length of the commentary is 15,000 words, but the length of the commentary for individual candidates will depend on the expected lengths of theses for conventional PhDs. For STEM candidates, the expectation would be that a commentary may be shorter than 15,000 words, whereas for candidates in the social sciences, arts and humanities, the expectation is that the commentary would be near to the maximum word count (10% leeway).

## Submission and Examination

To satisfy the requirements of the degree of PhD by Published Work, the submitted material must constitute a substantial original contribution to knowledge. The material should be clearly and concisely written and well-argued. The commentary should explain the inter-relationship between the material presented and the significance of the published works as a contribution to original knowledge within the relevant fields. It should establish the significance of the published work in relation to other work in the field. It should contain a full bibliography of all the work published by the candidate.

The Academic Regulations for Research Degrees sets out the expectations for the published work submitted as follows (Section C1.13):

‘Work...should normally consist of one or more of the following:

- a) Books and Book Chapters – the defining characteristic being that every book should have an International Standard Book Number (ISBN), whether a monograph or chapters published in similarly accredited books or edited collections.
- b) Refereed Journal Papers – research papers aimed primarily at the academic and research community (including electronic publications).
- c) Other Media/Other Public Output – which represent a contribution to research in the academic subject concerned. Examples might include designs (e.g. architectural or engineering designs), artwork, maps, patents granted, publicly available software, works created or performed if publicly recognised as original research contributions to the subjects.’

Copies of each work needs to be submitted with the commentary. In some areas, textual or visual descriptions of the works will need to be submitted rather than the works themselves. For example, if the candidate is a curator of exhibitions, photographs of the exhibition, its catalogue, reviews etc. may be submitted. Similarly, if performances are being submitted, recordings and photographs may be submitted with the final commentary. For submissions in these and other areas where practice rather than academic writing is being submitted, it may be useful for applicants, candidates, supervisors, external reviewers, examiners and doctoral coordinators to consult the [Handbook for Practice-based PhDs](#).

The viva should be conducted in the same way as those examining conventional PhDs. However, while both the published work on which the submission is based and the commentary can be questioned and discussed, examiners must be aware that the appropriateness of the submissions – that they meet the criteria for doctoral work – has already been assessed and established during the admissions process. Examiners cannot ask for revisions to the already published work.

The [Academic Regulations for Research Degrees](#) sets out the possible outcomes for an examination of a PhD by Published Work (Section C1.24):

- a) **The candidate be awarded the degree;**

b) **The candidate be awarded the degree, subject to minor amendments being made to the material, which must be completed within a period of three months from the official notification of the outcome.** The examiners should agree if the amendments can be approved by the internal and/or the external examiner. The revised material, plus a list of or commentary on the amendments made, should be submitted by the candidate to the appropriate examiner(s) via the Graduate School Registry (GSR). If the submitted amendments are not of an acceptable standard the examiners may, at their discretion, recommend a further period of one month for the amendments to be brought up to the required standard; no further extension will be permitted;

c) **The candidate be awarded the degree subject to revision of the thesis, to be completed within a period of six months from the official notification of the outcome** The examiners should agree if the amendments can be approved by the internal and/or the external examiner, however, where revisions involve substantive changes to the thesis, an external examiner must oversee the process. The revised thesis, plus a list of or commentary on the amendments made, should be submitted by the candidate to the appropriate examiner(s) via the Graduate School Registry (GSR). If the submitted amendments are not of an acceptable standard the examiners may, at their discretion, recommend a further period of one month for the amendments to be brought up to the required standard; normally no further extension will be permitted;

d) The candidate is not awarded the degree.

## Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP)

The Doctoral Researcher Development Programme (DRDP) is a suite of, free, tailor-made workshops, specialist skills sessions and personal development planning activities, designed for doctoral researchers at University of Westminster.

The programme has been developed around the **Vitae Researcher Development Framework**, a tool that helps researchers plan their professional development. This means that all of our provision has been designed to help you explore and develop the wide range of knowledge, skills, and behaviours of researchers to support your doctoral studies and future career.

A dedicated [DRDP website](#) provides comprehensive information on each of the workshops and activities.

All DRDP workshops and activities can be searched and booked on the Inkpath platform. Inkpath —also usefully recommends DRDP workshops based on your preferences, and can be used to create a portfolio of your DRDP attendance and other internal and external training and activities such as conferences, exhibitions and publications. Inkpath can be accessed through the Inkpath Web App or by downloading the Inkpath mobile app (Android and iOS).

Together with your Director of Studies, you will plan the workshop sessions that you will be attending each year, based on your own specific project and development needs (this is known as the skills assessment process or audit).

## Further information

Information on applying for PhDs by Published Work can be found on our research degrees [admissions pages](#).

Section C of the [Academic Regulations for Research Degrees](#) sets out the regulatory framework for PhDs by Published Work.

The following publications may be of use:

Sin Wang Chong and Neil Johnson, *Landscapes and Narratives of PhD by Publication: Demystifying Students' and Supervisors' Perspectives*, Springer, 2022.

Susan Smith, *PhD by Published Work: A Practical Guide for Success*, Palgrave, 2015.

## Who To Contact

Head of the Graduate School: [Contact Dr Margherita Sprio](#) 

Assistant Head of the Graduate School: [Contact Dr Aleka Psarrou](#) 

### PhD Coordinators:

School of Media and Communications: [Contact Dr Alessandro D'Arma](#) 

School of Arts: [Contact Dr Ozlem Koksai](#) 

School of Computer Science and Engineering: [Contact Dr Aleka Psarrou](#) 

School of Architecture and Cities: [Contact Dr Kate Jordan](#) 

School of Life Sciences: [Contact Dr Polly Hayes](#) 

Westminster Law School: [Contact Dr Ruth Mackenzie](#) 

School of Social Sciences: [Contact Dr Dan Greenwood](#)  (Sem 1); [Contact Dr Adam Eldridge](#)  (Sem 2)

School of Humanities: [Contact Dr Sylvia Shaw](#) 

Westminster Business School: [Contact Dr Spinder Dhaliwal](#) 