



(Author)

Academic Council Graduate Studies Committee

(Title of Item)

PhD by Prior Published Work: A Policy for a New Entry Mechanism

PhD by Prior Published Work: Policy on a New Entry Mechanism

Introduction

The aim of this policy is to establish a new entry route to the PhD for individuals who have already demonstrated significant research output through discipline specific measures, including (but not limited to) peer reviewed publications. This policy does not establish a new award; it allows for scholars who have not followed the traditional research route to a PhD to leverage their substantial research experience to present a thesis for examination. A substantial aspect of the PhD in UCC is the mentoring and training processes. Therefore it is necessary for a potential applicant to demonstrate that their existing portfolio of research output meets the discipline specific benchmarks that would be expected of a PhD graduate in that discipline. Given the commitment of UCC and its academic staff to the integrity of the research output of our PhD graduates, it is also necessary that the veracity of the research output of the applicant be assessed prior to registration as a PhD student.

Existing UCC & NUI Policy

In considering the concept of PhD by Prior Published Work, there are three existing UCC regulations that allow for similar processes:

Firstly, for a PhD student, it is allowable for a shorter period of registration to be approved at application stage by a School/Department on the basis of advanced academic standing. This is frequently used when PhD students transfer from another University.

Secondly, UCC permits PhD theses to be presented in the form of a Publication-based Thesis and the format of such a thesis is described in the *Procedures for Submission and Examination of Doctoral Degree in University College Cork*. In some Universities this is referred to as a thesis submitted in the form of a series of published papers to distinguish it from PhD by Prior Published Work. Such theses consist of work completed and published during the registration period rather than prior to registration.

Thirdly, in the case of the MD degree, there are three modes of registration, one of which is MD by Published Work. For this mode, the minimum registration period may be waived, the publications must relate to a single theme and only published papers can be examined. A preliminary procedure must be followed before an application is accepted and a supervisor assigned. The candidate must submit copies of the publications in addition to a curriculum vitae and a commentary identifying the contribution of the candidate in the case where multi authored papers are included. No time limitation is imposed on the published material included.

It is also important to consider the regulations for higher doctorate degrees on Published Works awarded by the National University of Ireland. A two stage evaluation process is used for these higher degrees. At the first stage *prima facie* eligibility to be examined for the degree is determined through consideration of the list of publications and curriculum vitae of the candidate, together with a commentary provided by the candidate on the corpus of research under consideration.

PhD by Publication in the UK

The UK Council for Graduate Education report on “The Award of PhD by Published Work in the UK” (by Professor Stuart Powell, University of Hertfordshire published in 2004) described the situation in the UK where 127 Institutions were surveyed. The report was a follow up of a 1996 report into the PhD by Published Work, prepared by Professor Keith Wilson, which was also published by UKCGE. The 2004 report highlighted a number of issues of interest:

- Of the 80 responses received, 64 Universities indicated that they offered a PhD by this route. This showed an increase from a 1996 survey when 37 institutions indicated that they offered a PhD by this route. The survey reported that the two Universities that used this route most frequently in the two years, December 2000 to December 2002, were Manchester and Cambridge, who awarded 12 and 11 PhDs respectively. Note that 116 such awards were made in this period by the 49 institutions responding.
- In 13% of the Universities, eligibility for this route is open to all with possession of the appropriate academic qualifications. The other 87% require some connection with the awarding University: as a current or former academic staff member; a current or former staff member; or alumni. A concern noted in the report indicated that restricting eligibility to current members of the University may give impression that the route is some form of privilege and may suggest that it is less academically demanding than the traditional thesis route. A number of Universities indicated that they were reviewing their regulations with a view to opening up the route to all appropriately qualified candidates.
- In the survey, 80% of the respondents indicated a supervisor or advisor is appointed.
- In the survey, 86% of the respondents require a candidate to undergo some kind of preliminary stage in applying for a PhD by this route. In the case of Cambridge University a two stage process is used, with the appropriate Faculty Degree Committee determining if published works submitted constitute prima facie a qualification for the degree.
- The majority of institutions set down no limitation of time with regard to the publications included, with the responsibility for judging contribution to knowledge and impact on the field at the time of publication given to the examiners.
- The majority of institutions do not specify the number or the kind of the publication included.
- Not all institutions that have the PhD by Published Work route allow published work to be submitted as part of their other research degree submissions, with only 34 of the 64 respondents allowing, for example a PhD thesis as a series of published papers, in their regulations. However 40 of the 80 respondents to the survey allow publications to be part of a research degree submission in one form or another.

Proposal

UCC already allows a reduced registration period and Publication-based Theses for Doctorate Degrees. However, only work completed and published during the registration period can be included in the Publication-based Thesis. It is proposed to introduce a new entry route to PhD registration which allows for a reduced registration period and for scholarly output published prior to the registration period to be included for examination.

The purpose of this policy is to grow PhD numbers by attracting established researchers whose prior research output is of sufficient quality and coherence to meet the standard of a PhD, but who may not be attracted to the possibility of registering for a PhD based on entirely new research, and would not be able to benefit from the current regulations governing the Publication-based Thesis.

The examination process is to be aligned with the existing Publication-based Thesis, i.e. the examiners may insist on major amendments to all aspects of the thesis, irrespective of the fact that they have previously been published.

The following procedure would be adopted:

- Entry to this route will be open to all candidates who fulfil the current admission standard for PhD in UCC where a candidate must have obtained a standard of at least Second Class Honours, Grade I, in an approved primary degree, or other evidence under the University's policy for *Recognition of Prior Learning for Admission to Research Degrees*.
- *Potential applicants should contact the Graduate Studies Office who will advise the applicant and the appropriate School or Department on the application process.*
- *As per existing UCC PhD regulations, a PhD by prior published work candidate will either have a minimum of two supervisors, or a supervisor and a PhD advisor, and these supervisor(s) should be identified before a formal application is made. The mentoring element of the traditional PhD should be replicated.*
- *In order to be considered for the PhD by prior published work, a candidate should demonstrate a substantial body of published research output (as per disciplinary norms), and a coherent sub-set of output that will form the basis of the PhD thesis. The candidate will apply to University and submit the following:*
 - The names of the agreed supervisor(s)/advisor;
 - A Curriculum Vitae;
 - A list of the *published research output (as per disciplinary norms)* demonstrating their ability as a researcher. This list should include evidence of the public availability and traceability of the publications;
 - A summary of the contribution to knowledge represented by the published output;
 - A statement identifying where and when the research contributing to the published output was undertaken;
 - In cases where any work to be considered has been written in collaboration with other persons, the candidate shall submit a statement quantifying their contribution to the formulation, execution, analysis and publication of the research;

- The subset of *published research output* which the candidate proposes to include in their thesis should be identified and a statement provided establishing how the works constitute a coherent body of study.
- The application will be forwarded to the appropriate School/Department/Discipline/Research Centre Graduate Studies Committee for consideration. The local Graduate Studies Committee will invite the applicant to present in person their research, which will allow any issues to be clarified through questions. The Graduate Studies Committee will determine whether the published works submitted demonstrate a substantial research output (*as per disciplinary norms*) and whether the subset of *published research output prima facie* constitutes a qualification for the degree. In forming a judgment the Graduate Studies Committee may take account of the general criteria for the award of a PhD, and, in addition, may take into account the following:
 - The number and quality of the individual outputs;
 - The proportion of sole author and principal author outputs;
 - The coherence of the subset of outputs.

The Graduate Studies Committee may consult with the Professor of the Discipline and external experts in arriving at their decision.

- In addition, the Graduate Studies Committee will determine:
 - The appropriate registration period, with a minimum of 1 year (or longer if deemed appropriate by the *appropriate School or Department*);
 - The appropriate coursework and training required. Note that the experience of the candidate as outlined in their CV may result in no modules being required.
- During the registration period, the candidate, under the guidance of the Supervisor(s), will complete their research and prepare a thesis for examination. Unlike the current regulations for a Publication-based Thesis as described in the *Procedures for Submission and Examination of Doctoral Degrees in University College Cork*, the restriction (section 2.8) of including only work undertaken during the period of registration will not apply. Only work that has actually been published should be included, so section 2.9 will not apply. However, the requirement for a coherent PhD topic (section 2.10), with a substantial introduction and conclusion (section 2.11) and the requirements regarding multi-authored papers (sections 2.12 and 2.13) will apply.
- Finally, allowing examiners to request amendments to all material in the thesis (section 2.14) will also apply. The proposed new regulations are included as Appendix A.
- No time limit should be set on the publications included in the thesis. As is normal for a PhD, the examiners will be responsible for judging contribution to knowledge and impact on the field at the time of publication. A thesis that does not make an original contribution will not meet the criteria for the award of a PhD.
- For monitoring purposes, examination reports for PhD theses based on prior published work should be clearly flagged when presented to ACGSC for approval.

Appendix A

Proposed changes to Procedures for Submission and Examination of Doctoral Degrees in University College Cork

2. Preparing Doctoral Theses

2.8. UCC permits PhD theses to be presented in the form of a Publication-based Thesis. The research described in a Publication-based Thesis will be presented in the form of a set of manuscripts or other scholarly outputs from the work undertaken during the PhD student's period of registration, typically with each manuscript forming one chapter of the thesis. In the case of students accepted under the PhD by Prior Published Work policy, scholarly output undertaken prior to their registration as a PhD student may be included. The typical work included will be in the form of a peer-reviewed journal article, but in certain disciplines it is recognised that other formats (i.e., peer-reviewed conference proceedings or chapters in books) may be a recognised final scholarly output. The work should not consist of a series of publications reporting essentially the same data or findings to separate readerships. Presentations at conferences which are not the final dissemination of the work concerned are not usually regarded as suitable for inclusion in such a thesis.

2.9. A typical Publication-based Thesis will normally include at least one paper published in a peer-reviewed academic journal or equivalent, and others in press, submitted, or planned for submission. In the case of students accepted under the PhD by Prior Published Work policy, all the scholarly outputs must have been published by the time of examination. In all cases, a key consideration for the Examiners is whether the quantity and quality of work presented represents an appropriate level of scholarly output for a Doctoral thesis in the discipline concerned.

2.10. All papers in a Publication-based Thesis should fit around the preapproved coherent PhD topic and should appear in text document format, although PDF copies of published work or work in proof should be included in an Appendix to the thesis submitted for examination. There does not have to be an exact correspondence between the published articles and thesis versions as, for example, additional material may be included in versions of publications included in a thesis, or sections contributed by others which are not necessary for the thesis version may be removed.

2.11. Publication-based Theses must include, as well as the works themselves, a substantial and original introduction and discussion to tie together the work, as outlined in local guidelines. The introduction will typically take the form of a review of the relevant literature and an explanation of the scope and objectives of the work described in the thesis; the discussion or conclusion should form a critical synthesis or analysis of the overall contribution of the work to the field concerned. Candidates may also include a summary of the publication history and plan for their work presented, and a commentary on the bibliometric significance of the means of dissemination used.

2.12. The student must normally be first author and key contributor to the papers presented in a Publication-based Thesis, although disciplinary differences in regard to policy on authorship will be respected.

2.13. In all cases where papers presented in a Publication-based Thesis have multiple authors, the individual contributions of the student and the co-authors to the paper should be clearly specified for

each article, and Examiners will be asked to judge in the *viva-voce* examination that the overall level of contribution and intellectual ownership of the work by the student is at the requisite level for the award of a PhD. In such cases, students are expected to inform co-authors of the inclusion of such work in their thesis, and quantify the extent of such additional input.

2.14. All elements submitted within the thesis, including material already published, are under examination by the Examiners, and amendments to the version of the work included in the thesis as a text-based document (i.e., not the PDF of the published article) may be required. While presentation of work which is publishable in whole or in part as a work of serious scholarship is a key criterion for the PhD examination, publication of work does not in any way predetermine the outcome of the examination.

Appendix B

Response of the College of SEFS, regarding PhD by Prior Publication

There is a range of views in the College of SEFS, about this document, both positive and negative. Some colleagues believe that this is a sensible and welcome initiative, whose introduction should be supported, while others are vehemently opposed to this proposal.

Please find below a number of questions and concerns that need to be answered and/or considered, as well as some required clarifications. Some of these were mentioned during the discussions at the two recent SEFS College Council meetings (18th November 2014 and 27th January 2015), while others were comments were submitted directly to the Graduate School.

Maintenance of the quality of the award

Will a PhD by prior publication have a negative impact on the overall quality; of the PhD? Does this lessen the more conventional models of PhD that are currently offered?

Given the enormous variability of candidate backgrounds, how will the quality of the award be maintained?

The quality of a PhD has been traditionally protected by the role of the supervisor(s), guiding and overseeing the research during the registration period. The PhD by prior publication eliminates the supervisor's core role: of monitoring the research from start to end.

PhD training is a mentoring process. During a PhD, an academic receives the necessary training by the supervisor(s) regarding honest referencing of sources, ethical issues, plagiarism and above all, key training in scientific inquiry. By completing a PhD via the traditional supervisor-based route, students receive in depth training to become future academic mentors. This mentoring component will be eliminated in a PhD by prior publication. How can someone who obtains a PhD by prior publication be trusted to in turn guide PhD students properly?

Is there precedent at UCC for applications of this nature and, if so, how many do we anticipate in future (e.g. how many MDs are)?

In order to maintain the quality of the PhD qualification, perhaps this initiative should only be used in exceptional circumstances, e.g. PhD degrees without the involvement of supervisors during the period when the research was undertaken, should only be awarded in exceptional circumstances, if the academic journals involved are of the highest recognized standard.

How does this differ from a DSc?

Registration

Is one year too short a minimum registration period?

Is there a mechanism for part-time registration (likely to be the most attractive) and if so how many years minimum registration will there be?

Does the applicant have to be in UCC or even Ireland during registration period?

Can students transfer from other institutions where research may have been undertaken? If so, how

will work performed at other institutions be accounted for?

There may be cases where there are sufficient publications to not require any additional research (in fact, that may be the typical case)? So, if there is no research to complete, do they just register for one year and wait to submit their thesis (while preparing their introduction etc.)? This should be discussed as it seems to be assumed there will always be research to be completed.

Consideration of the case for the PhD by published work

Which Graduate Studies Committee decides if the publications will qualify for the degree?

If the Graduate Studies Committee takes on the responsibility to evaluate the body of prior published work, how will they do it? And how would UCC's reputation be affected if the Graduate Studies Committee or the supervisor, appointed for one year, gets it wrong (e.g. does not spot plagiarism or the work cannot be repeated in the lab.)?

Is it best that the candidate submits their initial material to a GSC? If so, should that be the Chair? Or should it be submitted to the most relevant Graduate School?

Could the GSC consult with internal as well as external experts when considering the initial submission, and if so, should it be stated that anyone thus consulted cannot be an examiner later in the process?

If it is unclear which GSC is most appropriate, could the application be submitted to the Head of relevant school/department instead?

Examiners

It was reiterated, that as with present PhD degrees, in all cases there must be an external examiner otherwise it is a system that has the potential to be abused.

Publications

With respect to the report by Powell (2004), cited in this document, the last bullet point about the UK survey, says 'Not all institutions that have the PhD by Published Work route allow published work to be submitted as part of a research degree submission, with only 34 of the 64 respondents allowing this in their regulations'. On what other grounds do they confer a PhD by Published Work?

What will be the situation regarding ownership in the case of joint publication as is often the case in science publications?

The fact that this PhD will be based on prior publications, eliminates the verification process, which is normally part of the supervisor(s)' role, that is key to determining whether a PhD is original and sound scientific work.

How will one determine that the work was original and that the work is scientifically valid? Where will one obtain the data needed to verify that the experiments are repeatable?

What is the potential impact on fee income? E.g. could a potential candidate work as a research assistant, publish papers during that time and then just register for one year, while previously they would have registered and paid fees for three to four years.

If it is for revenue generation, is there a solid business case?

Reason for introduction

It is recognised that many people engage in research without attending graduate schools. They gain experience and skills and sometimes become better qualified for scientific research than some of traditionally trained PhD graduates. However for the former group of people, the lack of a PhD degree, may impair their careers. For these people, a fast route towards a PhD can be regarded as a positive initiative.

Is the role of this to aid the progress of lapsed PhD students (i.e. more than 5 years post completion) or UCC staff members without a PhD? If so why not offer a fee exemption or a simpler incentive to encourage submission and completion.

If it is to attract established industrial researchers why not simply offer deferred submission in addition to an outstanding contribution to the field?

Qualifications of the candidates

Will this be available to students who have not completed undergraduate degrees in the recent past?

Should this only be available to candidates who are in full-time or part-time employment?

Prepared by Head of Graduate School of the College of SEFS, 28th January 2015.

Appendix C

College of Medicine and Health

Graduate School Committee response

The proposal for PhD by prior publication was discussed at the Graduate School committee meeting held on 5th December 2014.

The proposal outlines a route whereby research presented in previously published scholarly output can be included in the assessment for obtaining a PhD. It is envisaged that a reduced registration period would apply.

The Graduate School Committee agrees that for academic credibility the entry to this route should be open to all qualified candidates who fulfil the current PhD admission standard for UCC, and not be limited to applicants with prior or current connections with UCC, e.g. staff members, alumni.

Concerns were raised as to whether a judgement on the quantity and quality of previously published work can specifically inform as to the intellectual ownership of that work (e.g. research planning and design), and whether the candidate's contribution is of sufficient value as to merit a PhD. It was suggested that the Graduate Studies Committee should have the option of interviewing candidates who otherwise fulfil the application criteria as outlined in the proposal, in order to assess their specific contribution.

It was noted that a suitable supervisor(s) with research interests that match the research topic of the applicant would need to be identified before an application is accepted.

If accepted, the proposals could involve the awarding of PhD degrees to applicants who are affiliated with other institutions, including Universities where PhD's are not awarded based on Prior Published work. Additional consideration will need to be given to the impact of this on UCC's standing and reputation, and how it is perceived by the third level sector in general.

In dealing with the above concerns a robust structure should be implemented and strict criteria added to the proposal for PhD by Prior Published work which should then be returned to the CoMH for further comments.

CoMH Council response

Dr Teresa Barbosa explained the background to this item at the meeting of College Council held on Thursday 29th January 2015. Dr Teresa Barbosa presented both the proposal and the comments of the Graduate School Committee which were then discussed by Council.

The College of Medicine and Health agree in principle that PhD by Prior Published Work is feasible given the correct quality assurance structure and protocol as an MD by Prior Published Work is already supported by the College of Medicine and Health. However, members expressed the view that a robust application system and clear award criteria would be required in order to assure the standard of the qualification.

The second issue which arose during discussion was the matter of whether this route of award by published work should be open to candidates who do not have an affiliation with the University, that is who are neither staff (past or present) or alumni. Opinion of the members of College Council was canvassed and a majority felt that the route should be open to anyone who meets the qualifying criteria. However a sizeable minority did express some reservations in this regard and again emphasised that their concerns might be assuaged by a robust quality assurance process around the award of the degree.

As mentioned in the Graduate School comments the College of Medicine and Health would request time to consider the final document and criteria for PhD by Prior Published work before we would be in a position to fully approve the proposal.

Appendix D

Feedback from CACSSS Graduate Studies Committee on proposal by Dr Liam Marnane for PhD by Prior Published Work 16th January 2015

The Committee noted that the concept of “published work” should recognise practice-based outputs (e.g. musical compositions) as well as traditional journal articles/books.

Some concern was expressed that the award of PhD might become devalued by the introduction of an option for earning a PhD in a very short period of registration.

Financial implications for the university of the shorter registration period were also noted.

A number of queries were raised in relation to the process of accepting students onto this type of programme and in relation to examination. For example,

- Will the prior published work have been peer reviewed, or will the PhD examiners assess it?
- Will the number and quality of the publications be specified?
- Who will approve applications – School, College or University?
- Will there be a viva voce examination?

Appendix E

Academic Council Staff Development & Enhancement sub-Committee (SDEC)

Comments on Proposal for “PhD by Prior Published Work”

submitted to SDEC for review by Dean of Graduate Studies

Background: At its meeting on 11 March 2014, SDEC discussed a draft document prepared by the Dean of Graduate Studies (DGS) on a proposal for “PhD by Prior Published Work”. At that meeting, it was agreed that the Chair would invite the DGS to attend the next SDEC meeting to facilitate informed discussion around the draft document. Meanwhile, the Chair sent the DGS SDEC’s initial comments on the draft document, for information, in advance of this meeting (see Minutes of SDEC meeting held on 11 March 2014, Item 6 – attached to this document for reference).

The DGS attended the SDEC meeting held on 8 April 2014 and presented the proposal to the meeting. In response to the proposal as presented by the DGS, the following points emerged at the SDEC meeting:

- [1] A PhD (in the traditional sense) is far more than simply producing a thesis. The period spent working towards a PhD, with an expert and experienced supervisor(s), is similar to a period of apprenticeship or training. Plus the mentoring role played by the supervisor(s) is an important part of the candidate’s development as a scholar/researcher.
- [2] While there were strong differences of opinion among those present at the SDEC meeting about how welcome the “PhD by Prior Published Work” proposal is as an initiative, if UCC decides to go down this particular route, then it was considered that the proposal appeared to be a reasonable way of proceeding.
- [3] However, the meeting felt strongly that potential candidates would need to be advised very carefully at the outset as to the nature of this particular route to a PhD. It was noted that the concept of a “PhD by Prior Published Work” may not be the norm in a particular discipline. There was a danger that it might be perceived in some quarters as a “second class” PhD qualification. In light of these concerns, it was suggested that a potential candidate and the Graduate Studies Office (GSO) should have a conversation with a view to identifying whether or not the “PhD by Prior Published Work” is the best approach for the particular candidate. The candidate should also be required to acknowledge, in writing, that the fundamental differences between the “PhD by Prior Published Work” and the traditional PhD have been explained to them.
- [4] It was stressed that, as regards quality control, the scrutiny of the publications in question/peer review etc. would have to be robust and be seen to be robust.
- [5] The meeting queried why the proposal was necessary at all when UCC already offered a route to PhD by publication.

- [6] The meeting considered that the route to PhD by prior published work would not be very attractive to UCC staff. What is really needed is more support for UCC staff undertaking a traditional PhD.
- [7] The meeting also considered the likely market for the proposed “PhD by Prior Published Work” which involved a very short period of registration and the possibility of including work published prior to that period of registration. One possibility is that there could be demand for this programme from researchers currently working in industry (e.g. engineers working in companies who are doing mainstream research).

Áine Ryall, Chair
On behalf of SDEC

7 May 2014

Extract from Minutes of SDEC meeting held on 11 March 2014

Item 6: PhD by Prior Published Work:

A document from the Dean of Graduate Studies, Dr Liam Marnane, on the theme “PhD by Prior Published Work”, had been circulated prior to the meeting for review & comment. (This document was also previously circulated to SDEC members on 18 February 2014. It has also been circulated to the Colleges for review & comment.) Given the potential significance of this policy initiative, it was agreed that the Chair would invite Dr Marnane to attend the next SDEC meeting to facilitate informed discussion around the draft document. The following initial views were expressed on the draft document:

- Clarification around the origin of this initiative and the rationale behind its development at this particular point in time would be welcome.
- Concerns were raised that the route to a PhD by prior published work might be seen as a “second class” PhD qualification and there was a risk of doing a serious disservice to a candidate with a significant body of published work who opted to go down this particular route to a PhD. Caution was therefore needed in framing the concept behind the proposal for a “PhD by Prior Published Work” and in developing the criteria for this particular route to a PhD.
- As regards the documentation that a candidate would be required to submit to the appropriate Graduate Studies Committee in order to be considered for this route to a PhD, it was considered that a “summary” of the contribution to knowledge represented by the published works was inadequate and that this requirement would need to be expanded significantly to require an extensive statement demonstrating *inter alia*: the development of the research; its overall contribution to knowledge; locating it in a broader disciplinary framework etc.
- It was considered that very rigorous criteria would be required, as well as detailed guidelines for potential applicants, so that the benchmarks for the degree are clear at the outset. This

was particularly important as regards the number and quality of the publications involved. It was considered that discipline specific indicators/benchmarks would need to be developed.

- There were concerns that the proposal could be confused with the existing NUI scheme on Degrees on Published Work. The question was asked as to how the standard to be applied in the case of the proposed PhD by Prior Published Work compares with the standard currently applied by the NUI for its Degrees on Published Work?

An important, general point emerged from the discussion to the effect that more institutional support is needed for UCC staff working full-time and also working to complete a PhD via the traditional route. It was considered that a range of supports and initiatives (e.g. protected writing time; writing circles; dedicated support seminars etc.) might be more beneficial in this regard than developing new routes towards a PhD.