

Research Degrees by Public Works

Notes of Guidance

1. The University's research degrees by public works (M Phil and PhD) consist of the presentation of a submission and the defence of the submission at an oral examination. The submission is made up of the candidate's public works undertaken prior to enrolment for the degree, and a context statement undertaken at the University under supervision.
2. The University's research degrees by public works are *equivalent to research degrees by thesis in every substantive way*.
3. The standards of the research degrees are as follows:

The standard of the PhD by Public Works is equivalent to that of a PhD by thesis. The candidate must have made a personal, systematic, study normally on a single or predominant theme with unity, continuity, and convergent treatment among the works. The candidate must have shown originality by the exercise of independent critical power and made a distinct and significant contribution to knowledge. The candidate must have presented and defended the submitted works to the satisfaction of the examiners.

The standard of the M Phil by Public Works is equivalent to that of an M Phil by thesis. The candidate must have made a personal, systematic study normally on a single or predominant theme or topic with unity, continuity, and convergent treatment among the works. The candidate must have contributed to knowledge of this theme or topic through critical investigation and evaluation. The candidate must have demonstrated an understanding of research methods appropriate to the chosen theme and defended the submitted works to the satisfaction of the examiners.

4. The public works submitted must be based on a *single or predominant theme*. Additionally, there must be unity, continuity, and convergent treatment among the works.
5. Provided that there is a *permanent record* of the work, and the work *embodies a research process*, and *it is in the public domain*, it will be acceptable for the degree. Thus, any work to which the public has access, either directly or on application under the Freedom of Information Act, is understood to be in the public domain. In the case of works of art, publication is often by presentation or display. Examples include the preparation of computer programs, scholarly works, edited texts, specialist reports prepared for government departments and other public bodies, translations, collections of artefacts, videos, photographic records, musical scores, and diagrammatic representations. This list is illustrative, and not intended to be exhaustive. The work must be available in a suitable form for perusal by supervisors and examiners.
6. For the PhD by public works, the submission must be '*original*' and '*significant*'. 'Originality' is understood broadly and includes offering something not offered previously, seeing something in a new way, applying a known technique, method or model in a new way or in a new context, putting forward new arguments, or a new interpretation of an idea. Again this list is illustrative, and not intended to be exhaustive.

7 The Context Statement

- 7.1 For the PhD by public works, the general purpose of the context statement is to supplement work of intrinsic doctoral standard in such a way as to create, overall, a PhD-equivalent submission.

In the case of the M Phil by public works, the context statement must supplement the published works in such a way as to create, overall, an M Phil-equivalent submission.

- 7.2 The context statement should be used creatively to supplement, or make explicit, or fill in the gaps left by the public works to ensure a PhD-equivalent or M Phil-equivalent submission. Thus, the content of the context statement will vary from case to case dependent on the character and content of the public works submitted. It is, therefore, not possible to put forward a template for the context statement or to prescribe definitively its content or character.

However, for the award of a research degree, the academic apparatus of the research must be clearly demonstrated. Thus, the following elements must be made explicit in the context statement where these are not already evident in the public work itself: an extensive reviewing of the existing literature or work in the field, an account and critique of the research methodologies used, evidence and exemplification of claims made that the selected work is equivalent to a conventional (thesis) route PhD (or M Phil), a description of the limitations of the research, a clear argument as to how the works relate to each other (in all cases where more than one work is submitted), and a full bibliography.

These elements are not the only ones that supervisors may require as part of a context statement. The idea is to use the context statement in a flexible way so that the qualities and elements present in a research degree by thesis are also present in a research degree by public works. In this way, the submission, *taken as a whole*, (public works and context statement) is equivalent to a research degree by thesis. It is, on the submission, taken as a whole, on which the candidate will be examined.

- 7.3 As the elements of the context statement will vary on a case-by-case basis, the word length of the context statement cannot be rigidly prescribed. The University's Research and Research Degrees Committee would normally expect a minimum of 10,000 words, and a maximum of 30,000 words, but these word lengths may be shortened or extended dependent on the circumstances of the case.