**FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENT**

8 June 2016

ALTERNATIVE THESIS FORMAT: GUIDANCE TO PGRs, SUPERVISORS AND INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL EXAMINERS

The Faculty of Environment is the first faculty in the University of Leeds to avail an alternative thesis format for PGRs alongside the conventional monograph format. The alternative thesis format is a “sandwich model” in which journal article manuscripts are preceded by an introduction, literature review and outline of methodology, and followed by a discussion and conclusion part to bind work intended for publication into a single whole, as explained below in more detail. This document provides informal guidance to the alternative format. For formal requirements and rules consult the protocol which is available online from at the website of the Research Student Administration of the University of Leeds, see <http://students.leeds.ac.uk/info/10125/assessment/773/submitting_your_thesis>

The alternative thesis format has several aims. Firstly, it seeks to incentivise the writing of academic publications from PhD research in the faculty, to ensure the PGR will develop core academic writing skills and become able to produce publishable work independently after graduation. Secondly, it will seek to advance the job prospects and career development of the PGR after graduation, as well as to increase the volume of academic output from the faculty. Thirdly, it seeks to alleviate the workload implications for PGRs of active pursuit of publications, by accepting publication-style material as a substantial part of a thesis. This is also expected to have a positive effect on study time from start to thesis submission.

The alternative thesis format will not be the default thesis format for all PGRs in the faculty – for many, the conventional monograph format will remain the choice. The formal commitment to the alternative thesis format is made on the Examination Entry Form, which is submitted for approval at least 3 months prior to the submission of the thesis for examination. However, the PGRs and supervisory teams should discuss the relevance and suitability of the format from the first year of studies, to ensure that the work is aligned appropriately from early on if the alternative format is chosen.

When preparing for the submission of examination entry forms, the supervisors must make internal and external examiner candidates aware of the intended use of alternative thesis format and to ensure the examiners have been provided with this guidance and have agreed to examine an alternative format thesis. Supervisors will also explicitly need to approve the alternative thesis format use in the examination entry documentation, and check that the work to be submitted conforms with the rules set out in the alternative format thesis protocol. When the internal examiner examines his or her first alternative format thesis, an Independent Chair is needed in the examination process.

The journal article manuscripts to be included in an alternative format thesis should report findings based on original theoretical or empirical work, modeling etc. that forms a part of the research conducted during the candidate’s postgraduate research studies in Leeds. This means that for example short published contributions such as opinions, comments or commentaries are not eligible, and nor are publications predating the commencement of PGR studies in Leeds or based on work conducted prior to commencement of PGR studies in Leeds. Journal article manuscripts to be included into an alternative format thesis are normally co-authored with supervisors (and in some cases with other researchers), with the PGR being identified as lead author(s).

The number of article manuscripts to be included into an alternative format thesis should be at least 3, the actual number depending on the nature of these outputs, the discipline, the nature of the research problem addressed and the structure of the thesis. One of the manuscripts should be accepted for publication by the time of thesis submission. The second manuscript should have obtained at least an invitation to revise and resubmit or potential acceptance subject to major revisions. Further manuscripts should be formatted for submission to a peer-reviewed journal. While detailed requirements are not presented for the quality or stature of outlets or outputs, a 3\* REF output could be considered as a benchmark for the expected level of ambition.

In the Faculty of Environment alternative thesis format the journal article manuscripts are preceded by an introduction, literature review and outline of methodology (front material), and followed by a discussion and conclusion part (back material). This will mean that there will often be some repetition of literature review, methodology content and references across the introductory material and the manuscript. Some such repetition of content and references arising from the stand-alone nature of the included journal article manuscripts should be considered unavoidable and acceptable in examination. Alternative format theses are also likely to be clearly shorter than conventional monograph format theses.

*The front material* preceding the journal article manuscripts should locate the work reported in the thesis to its reviewed peer literature and describe the overall research design and data acquisition/material collection and analysis solutions, in order to bind the included manuscripts into a single whole. The integrating material preceding the included manuscripts should not exceed 15000 words in length and it should contain its own list of references.

*The back material* presented after the included manuscripts should also help bind them into a single whole and include the discussion and conclusions. The back material should not exceed 10000 words in length and it should contain its own list of references. Where the manuscripts are or are to be complemented with supplementary material in print or online publication outlets, the material should be presented as appendices of the thesis. Appendices can also contain other material providing supplementary information related to any preceding part of the thesis.

The thesis will need to be based on a uniform page layout throughout: this includes formatting the text of the included manuscripts so that they use the same font size, line spacing, margins, referencing etc. practices as the rest of the thesis. Each manuscript shall also include its own list of references. If the manuscripts included into an alternative format thesis have already been accepted for publication and have progressed through production in the publication outlet, a pre-proof stage manuscript should be included into the thesis.

The academic credentials of journal article manuscripts included into an alternative format thesis will be deemed in examination and not on the basis of their publication status or outlet. This means for example that examiners may request amendments or revisions to the three manuscripts that form the core of the alternative format thesis. The faculty protocol and this guidance will be reviewed again late in academic year 2016-17 in light of the accumulated evidence and experience to assess whether the regulations and guidance need further detailing or changes.