

General Regulations for the Presentation of Theses

AU-GSMC-22-5493-B

Applicable to postgraduate students in all years of
research degree programmes

2024-25

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Policy Summary

These General Regulations, approved by the University Research Committee, set out the requirements for the presentation of theses for the postgraduate research degree programmes of MSc or MA (by Research); Master of Philosophy (MPhil); Doctor of Philosophy (PhD); Doctor of Medicine (MD), and professional doctorates, including:

- The requirements for presentation, content, and submission of theses.

Related Regulations, Policies, and Guidance

These general regulations should be read in conjunction with the University's [General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis](#) and the [Code of Practice for Research Degrees](#).

General regulations for other types of programmes operated by the University are available on the [general regulations webpage](#).

Version Control

Reference Number	Version	Responsible Officer	Approved by	Approval Date	Effective Date
AU-GSMC-18-1701	A	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2019	September 2019
AU-GSMC-19-2629	B	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2020	September 2020
AU-GSMC-19-2629	C	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	October 2020	October 2020
AU-GSMC-20-3438	B	Alison Birch	University Research Committee	July 2021	September 2021
AU-GSMC-21-4903	A	Yvonne Henderson	University Research Committee	July 2022	September 2022
AU-GSMC-22-5493	A	Yvonne Henderson	ULTC	July 2023	September 2023
AU-GSMC-22-5493	B	Adam Hewitt	No approval required – document rollover	NA	September 2024

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The responsibility for the production of the required number of copies of the research thesis lies solely with the student (see [section 4](#)).
- 1.2 Where additional copies of the thesis are requested by an Executive Dean or other individual, the cost of producing the extra copy or copies must be met by the person(s) making the request.
- 1.3 The cost of amending the thesis following an unsuccessful examination must be met by the student.
- 1.4 Any theses which are not presented in accordance with these Regulations, or whose presentation is not of a sufficiently high standard, may be returned to the student and will not be accepted for examination or re-examination until the faults have been corrected.
- 1.5 The thesis should be proof-read carefully for typographical errors before being submitted.

2 PRESENTATION

- 2.1 All the copies of the thesis must be prepared with the same quality of paper and identical text, diagrams etc.

2.2 Language

- 2.2.1 The thesis must be written in English, except where Regulation 2.2.2 (below) applies.
- 2.2.2 A research student in the School of Social Science and Humanities may submit the thesis in one of the languages taught and examined in that School providing that permission has already been granted at the time of the Qualifying Report (see Regulation 8.3g of the General Regulations for Degrees by Research and Thesis).

2.3 Paper and Layout

- 2.3.1 The thesis must be printed on white A4 size paper of good quality, between 70gsm and 100gsm weight.
- 2.3.2 Only one side of the paper should be used.

2.4 Font Size

- 2.4.1 The main body of the thesis text should be printed in black ink only using a clear 11 point font (sans serif is strongly recommended, e.g. Arial); the height of lower-case text should be around 3mm. Additional text, e.g. captions for figures, footnotes, should be set to 10 point of the same font used for the main text.

2.5 Line Spacing

- 2.5.1 Single line spacing must be used for the thesis abstract, indented quotations, footnotes, formulae, diagrams, captions and tables, and may be used in Appendices and References.
- 2.5.2 1.5 line spacing must be used for all other textual material throughout the thesis.

2.6 Margins

- 2.6.1 The margins of the thesis should measure not less than 20mm on the left-hand side and not less than 15mm for the other margins.

2.7 Page Numbers and Footers

- 2.7.1 Every page of the thesis should be numbered consecutively from beginning to end, beginning with the title page and including pages of diagrams, photographs, and the appendices. As an alternative, roman numerals (i, ii, iii etc.) may be used for material that precedes the first page of the first chapter, provided that the first chapter begins at page 1.
- 2.7.2 The page numbers should be placed in the bottom right hand corner. They do not need to be preceded by the word 'Page', e.g. Page 1 etc.
- 2.7.3 If the thesis occupies more than one volume, the second and subsequent volumes should begin with page 1 rather than continue the numbers from the preceding volume.
- 2.7.4 Every page of the final thesis submitted after the examination, with the exception of the title page, must also have a header or footer, in the format: initials, surname, abbreviation for degree, Thesis, Aston University, year thesis was submitted for examination (or re-examination, if applicable), e.g.

A.N.Other, PhD Thesis, Aston University 2021.

2.8 Figures

Figures, tables, diagrams etc. must be labelled and numbered separately (see Regulations 3.6 and 3.7.2 below).

2.9 Length

- 2.9.1 Theses presented for the award of MSc/MA (by Research) should not normally exceed 30,000 words in length.
- 2.9.2 Theses presented for the award of Doctor of Medicine (MD) should not normally exceed 50,000 words in length.
- 2.9.3 MPhil or doctoral theses (apart from MD) should not normally exceed 80,000 words in length. Theses for professional doctorates (e.g. DBA, DOptom) may be shorter than for a traditional PhD.

- 2.9.4 Appendices, references and bibliographies will not contribute to the word count. Footnotes will not contribute to the word count unless the thesis is in a Law or Literature research area.
- 2.9.5 Students are expected to write within the word limit set for their programme of study, which should be agreed with their Supervisor. Theses that exceed the word limit will not normally be accepted for examination and any student who anticipates exceeding the word limit should seek the advice of their Supervisor before submitting the thesis.

3 CONTENT

3.1 Order of Items

The thesis must contain the following items in the order given (see below for more information on the items):

Title Page
 Thesis Abstract
 Dedication (optional)
 Personal Acknowledgements (if appropriate)
 Collaborator Acknowledgements (if appropriate)
 List of Contents
 List of Abbreviations (if applicable)
 List of Tables, Figures etc. (optional)
 Main Text of Thesis
 List of References*
 Appendices*

* If the Appendices are to be bound in a separate volume, then the list of references should be placed at the end of the volume which contains the main text of the thesis.

3.2 Title Page

The title page of every volume of the thesis must contain the following information:

- the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any), as agreed with the Supervisor;
- the volume number, if more than one volume will be submitted;
- the full name of the research student (must match the name the student has enrolled under on the University's student records system);
- the degree, written in full, for which the student is enrolled (e.g. Doctor of Philosophy);
- the official title of the University ('Aston University');
- the month and year of first submission for examination or, if resubmitted, the month and year of resubmission for re-examination (i.e. not the month/year of the *viva voce* examination or award);
- the following copyright statement:

©full name of research student, year of submission (or resubmission for a re-examined thesis), e.g. ©Any Person, 2021
 [full name of research student] asserts their moral right to be identified as the author of this thesis

“This copy of the thesis has been supplied on condition that anyone who consults it is understood to recognise that its copyright belongs to its author and that no quotation from the thesis and no information derived from it may be published without appropriate permission or acknowledgement.”

A sample title page is given at the end of these Regulations.

3.3 Thesis Abstract

3.3.1 The thesis abstract is a concise description of the work undertaken and should contain reference to the problem to be addressed, the approach taken, the key results and conclusion. It must be written in English and printed in single spacing. All the information should be contained on one sheet of A4 paper unless two abstracts are required (see [Regulation 3.3.3](#) below).

3.3.2 The abstract page must be headed 'Aston University', and give:

- the full title of the thesis (and sub-title, if any);
- the full name of the research student;
- the degree for which the student is enrolled;
- the year of submission or, if resubmitted, the year of resubmission.

3.3.3 The abstract itself should not exceed 300 words. If the student has obtained permission to submit the thesis in a foreign language, a translation of the abstract should also be provided.

3.3.4 At the end of the abstract page there must be up to ten key words or phrases which can be used as index terms by the British Library for the national EThOS Service.

3.4 Acknowledgements

3.4.1 Personal Acknowledgements

Students may acknowledge those who have provided support to them.

3.4.2 Collaborator Acknowledgements

Any collaborative work must be clearly acknowledged by the student in a signed statement submitted with the thesis and this acknowledgment should be included in the thesis. .

3.5 List of Contents

3.5.1 All chapters, sections and relevant subdivisions of the thesis must be listed in the correct sequence, with page numbers.

3.5.2 If the thesis comprises more than one volume, the contents of the whole thesis must be listed in the first volume. Each subsequent volume must contain a list of its particular contents, with page numbers.

3.6 List of Tables, Figures, etc.

If a list is included, all tables, figures, photographs, diagrams etc. must be listed in the correct order in which they appear in the text (and Appendices), with page numbers.

3.7 Main Text of Thesis

- 3.7.1 The thesis must be divided as appropriate into chapters, sections and, if necessary, other sub-divisions. Each chapter must have a title and begin on a new page. Any system of headings or numbering of sections or sub-sections must be used consistently.
- 3.7.2 Every table, diagram, figure or illustration must be clearly labelled and numbered, with a descriptive caption. The table, diagram, figure or illustration should be placed near the text to which it relates.
- 3.7.3 Students should remember that if they include colour photographs, or tables or diagrams using colour, the full meaning may be lost when they are reproduced in monochrome.
- 3.7.4 If abbreviations that are not commonly used are included in the thesis, the first use of the abbreviation should appear in brackets after the full wording. If many abbreviations are used, they should be included with their full wording in a list at the beginning of the thesis and be referenced in the List of Contents.

3.8 List of References

- 3.8.1 All published material referred to in the text of the thesis, including a student's own published work, must be clearly identified.
- 3.8.2 The student must use a consistent system of notation following a citation/referencing style that is appropriate for their discipline.
- 3.8.3 Regardless of referencing style, the references section must provide sufficient information for future readers to identify the publication and locate the specific section referred to.
- 3.8.3.1 References to **books** should typically include the name of the author, the title of the book, the name of the publisher and year and place of publication.
- 3.8.3.2 References to **articles** in periodicals should typically include the name, with initials, of all the authors, the title of the contribution, the title of the publication, the volume number, number of first and last pages (where available), and year of publication.
- 3.8.3.3 References to **conference proceedings** should typically include the name of the conference, the name(s) of any sponsoring bodies, the date when and place where the conference was held, the date and place of publication, the publisher, and the editor if applicable.
- 3.8.3.4 References to **reports** should typically include the series name and number where there is one.

- 3.8.3.5 References to **publications available electronically** should typically include the type of electronic medium (e.g. World Wide Web page), as many details of publication as are available and, where publication details are not clear, the date accessed and the internet location.
- 3.8.3.6 References to **chapters in edited books** should typically include the name of the author, year of publication, title of chapter, title of book, editor(s) of book, pages of chapter, name of publisher and year and place of publication.
- 3.8.3.7 References to **working papers** should typically include author, date (month and year) and publisher or equivalent.

3.9 Appendices

- 3.9.1 Any material which the student considers to be an important and relevant part of the argument in the thesis, but whose bulk would interrupt its flow (e.g. a list of published work), should appear as an Appendix.
- 3.9.2 The Appendices should not contain information which is already included in the main text of the thesis.

3.10 Additional Unbound Material, including Audio Visual Material

- 3.10.1 Whenever practicable, diagrams, maps, illustrations, computer printouts and tables must be bound into the thesis. Transcriptions of audio speech recordings should be included in the text of the thesis.
- 3.10.2 Additional unbound material, including audio-visual material, should be stored in Box prior to the examination. Details of the link to the Box folder should be submitted with the thesis and will be shared with the Examiners.
- 3.10.3 The Box folder must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, degree and date. All items in the Box folder must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item in the Box folder must match its number and description in the List of Contents.
- 3.10.4 After the examination, the same additional unbound material as was stored in Box for the Examiners should be stored on a USB stick and submitted with the print copy of the thesis. The USB stick will be forwarded to Library Services with the thesis.
- 3.10.5 The USB stick must be labelled with the research student's name and initials, abbreviation for degree (e.g. PhD), and date. All items on the USB stick must be numbered and described in the List of Contents. Each item on the USB stick must match its number and description in the List of Contents.

3.11 Research Data

Research data (methods and results) are core to research and should be managed in a secure, safe and accurate manner that would facilitate validation of research findings by independent researchers and audit, and in accordance with the University's Research Data Management Policy and any specific requirements of the student's

sponsor. Raw data should not be submitted with the thesis but it must be made available to Supervisors (normally in a Box folder set up by the Supervisor) and, subject to ethical and confidentiality considerations, to Examiners.

4 SUBMISSION OF THESIS

4.1 Submission before Examination

- 4.1.1 The student must submit an electronic copy of the thesis for examination, saved as a single protected file. This copy of the thesis will be made available to the Examiners by the Graduate School Office; a hard copy of the thesis may be requested by any Examiner.
- 4.1.2 The electronic copy of the thesis may be uploaded to plagiarism detection software and if the electronic format is not compatible, the student may be required to provide an alternative electronic copy of the thesis.

4.2 Submission after Examination

- 4.2.1 After the *viva voce* examination, the student must submit to the Graduate School Office one copy of the thesis, printed in the manner prescribed in Regulations 4.2.3 to 4.2.4 below, and an electronic copy, both of which must incorporate any revisions required by the Examiners.
- 4.2.2 The copies of the thesis must be accompanied by a signed statement from the Internal Examiner (or nominated External Examiner in the case of a staff candidate) certifying that they are identical versions of the work assessed by the Examiners, except where revisions were made at their request.
- 4.2.3 Each print copy thesis will be A4 in size and must be loose bound in a manner specified by the Graduate School.
- 4.2.4 No single volume should exceed 400 pages.
- 4.2.5 One copy of any unbound material, including audio visual material, should be submitted with the thesis, presented as in Regulation 3.10.
- 4.2.6 The preferred format for the electronic copy is a single unprotected Portable Document Format Archivable (PDF/A) file; where this is not possible, a single unprotected PDF file will be acceptable. The electronic copy will be accompanied by the Research Degree Deposit Agreement Form, signed by the student. This Form will be retained by Aston University's Library Services.
- 4.2.7 The electronic copy must be clearly named with the student's full name, Student Number, and year of submission or resubmission for examination.
- 4.2.8 Where a student who submitted for PhD is recommended for the award of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page, thesis summaries and the spine of the bound copies of the thesis.

5 RESUBMITTED THESES

- 5.1 The above requirements apply equally to first submission and resubmission of the thesis, with one exception: where a student is required to resubmit a former PhD thesis for the degree of MPhil, the references to Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) should be amended to Master of Philosophy or MPhil on the title page. The date the thesis was resubmitted for re-examination, not the date of the first submission, should be used, including in the copyright statement.

6 SAMPLE TITLE PAGE OF THESIS

Note: the outline box is indicative of the page space and is not required in the thesis

THE FULL TITLE OF THE THESIS AS AGREED WITH THE SUPERVISOR

The sub-title of the thesis [if applicable]
should follow the full title of the thesis

VOL I [if applicable]

THE FULL NAME OF THE RESEARCH STUDENT

Doctor of Philosophy / Doctor of Business Administration / Doctor of Education /
Doctor of Hearing Therapy / Doctor of Medicine / Doctor of Optometry /
Doctor of Pharmacy / Master of Philosophy / Master of Science (by
Research)

ASTON UNIVERSITY

Month and year of submission (or resubmission, if applicable)

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