FBE Guidelines: Thesis by Publication

These FBE Guidelines are to assist HDR candidates and supervisors prepare FBE theses that include chapters or papers written in journal article format. Thesis by publication is Macquarie University’s preferred format for all HDR research theses. MQ University Guidelines on thesis by publication can be found at: http://www.mq.edu.au/policy/docs/hdr_thesis/guideline_by_publication.html

(Note: Papers forming part of a thesis must have been written for publication but need not have been published before the candidate submits the thesis.)

Theses written for publication advantage HDR candidates in a number of ways:

- Publication deadlines establish writing milestones and allow candidates and supervisors more readily to monitor progress.
- External reviewers’ comments on papers provide critical guidance to supplement supervisors’ comments, allowing candidates further to develop the quality of their work ahead of submission.
- By training HDR candidates in the skills associated with research publication, writing in journal article format furthers candidates' career progression.
- Publication of candidates' work makes their research findings available sooner to the research community.

There are, however, some commonly articulated concerns about the thesis by publication format:

- Because journal articles typically do not allow for a thorough discussion of the literature, candidates may not be able to demonstrate a comprehensive understanding of the relevant theoretical issues involved in their research.
  - Response: The thesis is more than a collection of individual papers. It also must include: a critical introduction, sections linking the papers, and a conclusion that synthesises all the material. Theoretical and other appendices can be included to create a coherent, integrated thesis.
- Journal articles do not demand detailed evidence for all analytical procedure(s) used; this may not allow candidates to demonstrate the full range of their technical expertise.
  - Response: Candidates can attach technical appendices to their theses to present output for each analytical procedure conducted.
- Co-authored papers, especially those in which the candidate is not the first author, do not allow the candidate to demonstrate the ability to perform independent research.
  - Response: Co-authorship with supervisors and with others is acceptable but since it is an HDR thesis, the candidate must specify her or his individual contribution to any co-authored papers included in the thesis.
- The length of a thesis by publication falls short of what is normally required for a PhD.
  - Response: We recommend that candidates aim for a length between 50,000 and 75,000 words (PhD) and 20,000-40,000 words (MPhil).
- Papers often include duplicated material; this can make the thesis tedious to examine.
  - Response: Some duplication or redundancy is acceptable, but candidates are asked to structure papers to avoid repetition of material.

Macquarie University acknowledges that the structure of theses will vary according to discipline standards and expectations within a standard framework. See Thesis Preparation Advice: http://www.research.mq.edu.au/students/thesis_examination/documents/
FBE offers the following guidelines to structure a Thesis by Publication:

1. Title Page
   - state the thesis title in full, candidate’s names and degrees, Macquarie University and the name of the Department, names of other organisations, institutes or laboratories in which the research was carried out (if applicable), date of submitted for the degree

2. Declaration Page
   - a statement signed by the candidate to the effect that the work has not been submitted for a higher degree to any other university or institution

3. Acknowledgements Page (optional)

4. Table of Contents

5. Abstract/synopsis
   - approximately 200 words for an MPhil degree
   - approximately 300 words for a PhD

6. Chapter 1 - Introduction
   - usually not in journal article format, as the thesis introduction needs:
     - to provide the background and context of the research
     - to identify the significance of the overall research problem
     - to present a comprehensive, critical, coherent overview of the relevant literature
     - to identify the distinct contribution the thesis makes to the literature
     - to outline how each self-contained journal article contributes to addressing the overall research problem

7. Chapters 2 through 4 or more
   - series of papers (approximately 3-5) written for publication in an academic journal
     - papers need not be published, but may be written for publication
     - published papers may be inserted in their published form
     - each paper should be accompanied by a brief introduction drawing attention to the unique issues, such as specific theories or methods used
     - each paper must contain a complete reference list, indicating the sources of information used
     - conference papers should not be included, but instead should be the basis for more substantial papers to be submitted as part of the thesis

8. Final Chapter – Conclusions
   - provides an integrative summary, drawing together all the work described in the journal-article-format parts of the thesis and relating this back to the issues described in the Introduction

9. Full Reference List
   - includes not only sources referred to in the journal articles, but also those referred to in the Introduction and other sections of the thesis

10. Appendices (recommended)
    - evidence of ethics approval for human subjects
    - theoretical and/or technical appendices demonstrating detailed aspects of specific theories and/or analytical techniques employed