

PhD Programme in Political and Social Sciences
Department of Political and Social Sciences
University of Bologna
PhD Dissertation Guidelines
(approved by the Academic Council on 11 May 2026)

The purpose of a doctoral dissertation is to produce a significant and original contribution to existing knowledge in a particular disciplinary field. The dissertation's fundamental purpose as part of doctoral training is to testify the author's autonomous capacity to produce innovative scholarship according to the standards of a specific discipline. The candidate's ability to defend his or her research before a panel of expert scholars constitutes the final step in obtaining the PhD.

A dissertation may be written in book format (monography) or as a collection of relatively independent papers (not fewer than three) organized around a common problem or issue, according to disciplinary norms. Under no circumstances can the dissertation consist of unrelated studies. An appropriate framework, including an introduction and a conclusion, is required.

It is permissible to include peer-reviewed scientific articles and book chapters in the thesis that have been submitted for publication or have already been published, provided that the overall work constitutes a coherent and original scholarly contribution. This entails that the articles and chapters must be appropriately and fully integrated into the overall structure of the thesis particularly through the inclusion of an original introduction and concluding chapter that bring together the individual articles. Both the introduction and the conclusion must not have been previously published.

Due caution should be given to the ownership of the rights to the writings intended to be included in the doctoral thesis: if the PhD candidate has retained his or her copyrights or has published under a *Creative Commons* type license, no permission is required. If, instead, the candidate has assigned his or her rights to the publisher (as implied in standard publishing contracts), he or she will have to request permission to include the already published articles so as not to incur malfeasance.

The importance of assessing whether excerpts of previously published writings might fall under the citation exception must be stressed, with particular attention to the length of the excerpts in relation to the overall work. If not, permission from the publisher will be required.

Regarding the inclusion of peer reviewed scientific articles authored by multiple authors, the Academic Board emphasizes that one of the central criteria of the dissertation is to see it as an instrument for assessing the candidate's ability to conduct research independently. For this reason, the Academic Board strongly suggests that co-authored writings not be included in the dissertation. It is permitted to include in the thesis only one co-authored peer reviewed scientific article. In the event of co-authorship with a colleague enrolled in the same PhD programme, the same peer reviewed scientific article must be included only in one thesis and not in the theses of both authors. Please note that in the case of co-authored peer reviewed scientific articles the candidate must outline the exact nature of their contribution at the beginning of the chapter. The candidate must also inform in advance any co-authors of the intention to include jointly authored writings in the dissertation. In any case, to avoid any

conflict of interest, co-authors cannot be the PhD candidate's supervisor or co-supervisor, nor will co-authors be allowed as members of the thesis defence committee.

In any event, theses containing published material will be examined according to the standard rules for examination of any thesis submitted for the PhD degree. The University of Bologna permits the possibility of setting an embargo period (max.36 months) during which the doctoral dissertation cannot be accessed., After the embargo, the thesis may be made available via open access according to the license terms chosen by the author.

Length, formatting, abstract.

See the instructions provided by the University of Bologna.

Declaration

The thesis must contain the following declaration signed by the author immediately after the title page:

I declare that this thesis has not been submitted as an exercise toward a previous degree at this or any other university, and that it is entirely my own work.