

PhD Programme in Political and Social Sciences

Department of Political and Social Sciences

University of Bologna

PhD Dissertation guidelines

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.

Though a crucial requirement of the doctoral thesis is its originality, in some cases, it is permissible to include previously published work. In fact, there are many disciplines – including in the social sciences – where it is customary to insert into the thesis articles that have already been submitted for publication or published. Nonetheless, the Academic Board considers this to be the exception and not the rule and will assess the matter on an individual basis upon the suggestion of the supervisor. In any event, such writings must be fully integrated into the body of the thesis.

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 articles authored by multiple authors, the Academic Board emphasizes that one of the central criteria of the dissertation is 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. In those rare cases in which the PhD candidate has compelling reasons to include a co-authored piece of writing in the dissertation, however, the Academic Board will make an assessment on a case by case basis. Please note that in the case of co-authored material the candidate must outline the exact nature of his or her 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 defense 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.