Guidelines for designing a thesis

The doctoral thesis is to be a carefully thought-out and reasoned discussion of a candidate’s own work in relation to the broader research field, and can be designed either as a compilation thesis or a monograph.

A compilation thesis consists of attached copies of a number of research articles or manuscripts, along with a summarising chapter. The research articles are to be of a quality corresponding to the requirements for publication in recognised academic journals with peer reviews procedures, and it should be possible to distinguish the doctoral student’s contribution in the work.

It is rarely the case that the research papers in a compilation thesis are solely authored by the doctoral student. For this reason, importance should be attached to the summarising chapter that, on the one hand, gives the doctoral student the opportunity to demonstrate an autonomous and independent intellectual performance and, on the other, enables assessment of the doctoral student’s autonomous and independent contributions. The summarising chapter is to provide an introduction to the papers and place the issues and results achieved into a general context. The summarising chapter must therefore be written in a different form to the papers in the thesis and must be possible to read as an independent academic text. The summarising chapter must not contain extensive copying of text, figures and tables from the papers compiled in the thesis.

The monograph consists of a cohesive report including a description of the research assignment, issues, working methods, analysis, results and a discussion. For monographs, it is particularly important that the candidate’s own research is presented in such a way that the methods used, results achieved and conclusions drawn can be understood and assessed.

The thesis must relate to the learning outcomes of the Higher Education Ordinance, which means the outcomes for both the compilation thesis and the monograph are principally to:

- demonstrate up-to-date specialised knowledge and a broad and advanced understanding of the research field,
- demonstrate the ability to place the thesis into a broader theoretical and scientific context,
- state clear goals of the thesis project and its most important hypotheses and issues,
- demonstrate familiarity with the methods and analytical tools used within the research field, and an ability to assess and evaluate them,
- demonstrate an ability to reflect on the importance and limitations of the candidate’s own research,
- make a significant contribution to the formation of knowledge in the field and identify the need for further knowledge.