



Lancaster University,
Department of Linguistics and English Language

GUIDANCE NOTES
Alternative Format PhD Thesis

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The Alternative Format (AF) PhD thesis is available in the Department of Linguistics and English Language (LAEL). It allows students to submit a PhD thesis that incorporates papers that are either: (i) in a format suitable for submission for publication in peer review journals or (ii) already published or accepted for publication in peer review journals.¹ When AF is used, it can provide students with a means to build their publications profile before graduating. It is also increasingly recognised as the norm in several disciplines to which PhD students in LAEL contribute and go on to work in. The alternative format thesis is in accord with university provision as set out in the **Manual of Academic Regulations and Procedures (MARP)** (<https://gap.lancs.ac.uk/ASQ/QAE/MARP/Documents/PGR-Regs.pdf>).

The alternative format thesis must conform to the same academic standards expected of a traditional/standard thesis (see [MARP](#)). A PhD thesis in the alternative format will usually incorporate **3-4 papers suitable for publication** (hereafter referred to as ‘publishable papers’). In addition, the thesis will include an introductory chapter and other chapters as set out below. Publishable papers may include those which are solely and/or partly authored by the student. It is important to note that the **AF thesis does not suit everyone or every project**. Opting for AF must be thought through with care and discussed in detail with supervisors. As detailed below, the AF choice must be agreed with supervisors, and **recorded using the relevant form** (see last page of this document). The guidelines below should be read alongside the University academic regulations contained in [MARP](#) for the submission of a PhD or MPhil thesis.

1. It is **NOT a requirement that the papers be published, or accepted for publication**, prior to the submission of the thesis for examination. Regardless of whether such papers have been refereed or are already published, the examiners must be satisfied that the thesis, overall, constitutes PhD-level work. Publishable papers must be presented carefully, either:
 - i) in their published form,
 - ii) ‘submitted for publication’ form, or
 - iii) ‘draft ready for submission’ form.

The thesis should remain an original contribution to the field of research by the student. Publishable papers may involve **named authors**, including the student’s supervisor(s), or other collaborators, e.g. other PhD students (if part of a larger project). However, **the work submitted must substantially be that of the student**. As with the standard format, **examiners must be satisfied that the candidate has sufficient ownership over the work submitted**. In cases when publishable papers involve other named authors, a full statement of authorship (see below) must be submitted for each such paper. **The student will always be listed as first author**.

¹ This distinguishes an AF PhD thesis from LU’s ‘PhD by Publication’. The latter is for staff only, and consists of a collection of previously published papers.

2. In order to protect the rights and interests of both candidates and other contributing authors, for any paper involving multiple authors, a full statement of authorship must be submitted which details, precisely, the input of all named authors. Examples of authorship statements are given at the end of this document. **Authorship statements must be accompanied by written certification from all named authors.**
3. The student's original contribution to the field of research will be assessed during the viva, as is the case with a traditional thesis. Similarly, as is the case with traditional format theses, external examiners may wish to pay particular attention to satisfying themselves that the submitted work is principally that of the candidate.
4. The thesis must constitute a body of materials tending towards a **coherent and continuous thesis**, rather than a series of disconnected chapters and publishable papers. A typical AF thesis might consist of:
 - i) an introductory chapter (described in 4. below)
 - ii) three to four publishable papers²
 - iii) short linking statements/chapters between publishable papers to create coherent linkages between aspects of the dissertation
 - iv) discussion chapter
 - v) a concluding chapter (including an outline of further research required in the field, and any recommendations of relevance)
 - vi) a consolidated bibliography (see below).

If one of the papers is not a literature review, **a literature review chapter should be included after the introductory chapter**. Students may find it necessary to include a **detailed methodology chapter** if the thesis requires more information on epistemology/methods than can be covered in the publishable papers (i.e. because of restricted word lengths) – or to do justice to methodological innovations or setting particularities. ALL material in the thesis is considered by the examiners, and subject to their recommendations.

5. The introductory chapter in the thesis should:
 - i) describe the background and context of the research and demonstrating the overall unity of approach(es) and theme(s);
 - ii) outline the rationale for submitting the thesis in alternative format;
 - iii) give an account of how the thesis AF has been constructed, and
 - iv) outline the student's own contribution to the research undertaken.

² The number of publishable papers included in the alternative format thesis may vary according to discipline and is not prescribed. Overall, the research presented in an **AF thesis should match the originality, and the quantity and quality of research and skill mix expected of a candidate submitting a traditional/standard thesis.**

6. Students must **try to avoid repetition** in the thesis. This applies particularly to the introductory material at the beginning of each chapter and publishable papers. Repetition of material across a number of papers and chapters may be inevitable – but rote repetition of text should be avoided. Any sections of the thesis which are published, or in publishable format, should be distinct and distinguishable to the examiners.
7. The student must ensure that the **thesis provides a critical review of previous research in their field of study** – whether this is achieved in the publishable papers or in a separate thesis chapter (e.g. in the literature review sections/chapter). As in a traditional PhD thesis, this critical stance must be sustained throughout.
8. The decision to pursue an AF thesis shall be taken no earlier than 12 months after initial registration for full-time students (24 months for part-time students) and prior to the appointment of external examiners. The decision to pursue an AF thesis must be made in consultation with supervisors and with the full support of supervisor(s) and the Head of Department who will confirm the precise format the thesis is to take, the appropriateness of AF for the research project, and that the candidate has the intellectual capacity and skills required to make the most of this format. Once approved, **a form requesting permission** to submit in AF (see end of document) must then be completed, counter-signed by the Head of Department OR Director of Studies, and lodged with the relevant Postgraduate Coordinator. Students must also submit a copy of the completed form when submitting their thesis.
9. **Supervisors** should **inform the proposed External and Internal Examiners** that the thesis is in AF at the earliest possible opportunity (some External Examiners may not be comfortable with examining an AF thesis). Supervisors should provide the Examiners with these guidelines and any further information required.
10. **References:** There should be a consolidated list of references in the thesis, in addition to the reference sections that appear in individual publishable papers.
11. **Pagination:** The publishable papers in an AF thesis will have their own distinct page numbers. These publishable papers' page numbers will therefore stand-alone independently of the thesis pagination sequence. To ensure this, candidates should insert a sheet of A4 paper before each publishable paper – on which is displayed the paper's number, title, and the relevant page number of the thesis. The first publishable paper will then follow, with its own pagination. Then another A4 sheet of paper should be inserted before the second publishable paper, carrying the required detail. This applies equally to theses in print and electronic forms.
12. **Thesis length:** as for a standard PhD thesis, AF theses for the degree of PhD shall not normally exceed 80,000 words, or 70,000 words for the Thesis and Coursework programme (including any footnotes and appendices but excluding the bibliography), for which approval may be granted by the body or officer with delegated authority from Senate.

13. Any publishable papers included in the thesis should not have been submitted previously for any degree at this or any other institution.

POSTGRADUATE RESEARCH STUDENTS WORKING ON AN AF THESIS MUST FOLLOW THE RELEVANT MARP REGULATIONS IN ALL OTHER RESPECTS

Author statement – examples

- I have written the article and carried out the research behind it. Named authors have provided comments on the text
- I have written the article and carried out the research behind it in collaboration with NAMED AUTHORS. I was responsible for XXXX. AUTHOR 2 was responsible for XXXX. AUTHOR 3 was responsible for XXXX.
- I have written the majority of the article and carried out the research behind it in collaboration with NAMED AUTHORS. I was responsible for XXXX and contributed sections XXXX. AUHTOR 2 was responsible for XXXX and contributed sections XXXX. AUHTOR 3 was responsible for XXXX and contributed sections XXXX.
- I have written the article and carried out the research behind it. NAMED AUHTORS contributed in terms of conception and design.
- The article (or a slightly adapted version of it) has been submitted to / published in Journal XXXX as: AUTHOR 1, AUTHOR 2, AUTHOR 3

Linguistics and English Language

Postgraduate Research Degrees FORM:

PERMISSION TO SUBMIT A THESIS IN ALTERNATIVE FORMAT

Name of Candidate: _____

Date of Registration: _____

Registration Number: _____

Division and Faculty: _____

Research Degree Title: _____

Date: _____

Thesis due for Submission: _____

This is to confirm that the above named student has been granted permission to submit a PhD thesis in Alternative Format.

Name of Supervisor 1: _____

Signature: _____

Name of Supervisor 2: _____

Signature: _____

Signature of HoD, or Director of Studies: _____

DATE of FORM SUBMISSION: _____

NB: A copy of this form must be held in the Linguistics and English Language Department's Postgraduate Office, and a copy must be submitted with the thesis.