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Publishing from a Research Thesis

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Congratulations on being awarded your degree! When you've finished celebrating, it's time to think about turning your thesis into articles for publication.

Is it easy to turn a thesis into articles for publication?

Unfortunately, even after you have done such a great job writing your thesis, you cannot submit it in the form of articles without sometimes quite major modifications. Resist the temptation to do a 'cut and paste job'!

A journal paper is quite different in many respects from a thesis in terms of:

- Length and amount of detail needed on a topic
- Depth of methodological discussion needed
- Language and style
- Interest-value of the material
- Audience

In working out your publication strategy you need to:

- Work on the publications with your supervisor/s - they are likely to be experienced writers and so will have a feel for how to develop articles from the thesis
- Consult libraries or journal websites to identify the most appropriate journals for your papers
- Make sure that you follow the journal author guidelines closely to improve the chances of acceptance of your paper.

Agreeing a publication strategy

It is important to discuss publications at the very beginning of your work on a Master's degree dissertation or doctoral thesis. Your supervisor/s will play a major role in helping you to develop your ideas, carry out the work, and write up the thesis. Therefore it is appropriate that you agree a strategy with them in order to ensure that it is sound and issues such as co-authorship have been discussed and agreed.

Journals are likely to have a policy on who can be included as an author and who should be acknowledged as making a contribution, but not as an author (see page 00). When your supervisor/s have participated in writing an article, then it is probably most appropriate that you are the first named author, followed by their names in the order agreed with them. It is conventional that the first named author is recognised as doing the major part of the work, and the others are seen as making a lesser contribution.

You can find out more about publication strategies from theses, other aspects of doing a research degree, and having constructive supervisory relationships in:

Dunleavy P (2003) *Authoring a PhD. How to plan, draft, write and finish a doctoral thesis or dissertation.* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke.

Rugg G and Petrie M (2004) *The unwritten rules of PhD research.* Open University Press, Milton Keynes.

When should I publish from my thesis?

It is usual to wait until your thesis is finished before writing papers for publication. However, it might be appropriate to publish an article while you are still working on the study:

- If you have discovered something genuinely new and want to establish your intellectual property rights (for more information on this, see <http://www.cla.co.uk/> and http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/bauthor/faqs_copyright.asp) and show that you are the originator of the discovery or invention. These sites will also help if you need to seek copyright permission to reproduce any extracts from another author's work in your articles.
- If you are doing a multi-stage study and one part is completed.
- If you have material for a methodological article.
- If it is a requirement of your doctoral programme that you publish papers before the oral examination (viva voce) or defence of your thesis.

How many articles can I publish from my thesis?

This may be the biggest study you will ever do, and it is vital to publish your findings while they are still fresh and relevant. It is tempting, once you have finished the thesis, to move on to new work – or to take a well-deserved break. After three or more years on the same project, you may feel burnt out with it. But you have so much material already there and it would be a great shame not to use it.

Implementing a publishing strategy

Discuss with your supervisor/s how many articles you will write, what will be included in each, the timetable for writing and submitting them, and how you will collaborate on the writing.

You might be able to write:

- A literature review article
- A methodological article
- One or more articles on study results

However, it is important to bear in mind the issue of 'salami slicing' (trying to get too many papers from the one study - see <http://www.icmje.org/> for more about this) or duplicating the material in more than one article (see page 00 on copyright issues).

Caution!

Unfortunately, not all student projects are suitable to be turned into an article for publication. Some are just too small-scale and/or local. This does not mean that your work was not valuable – after all, you were awarded the degree! But a piece of work done for one purpose does not always lend itself to another. If in doubt about whether to spend time turning your work into an article, write an abstract of the proposed article and email it to the journal editor asking if it will be suitable.

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