POLS Guidelines for Article-Based Dissertations
Aug. 10, 2018

Overview

The School of Graduate Studies (SGS)'s regulations on theses permit two formats: the traditional format, which has the structure of a book divided into chapters, and the somewhat confusingly titled "Manuscript, Project, Portfolio" format, referred to here as the article-based format. SGS guidelines describe the core manuscripts on which the article-based dissertation is based as   "a series of main sections/chapters, each of which stands alone and could be suitable for dissemination though appropriate means to target relevant audiences... (e.g.) an academic journal, position paper, policy paper, technical report, popular article, evidence-based business case or other output relevant to the area of study." The purpose of the present document (the "POLS Guidelines...") is to specify the conditions under which an article-based dissertation will be permitted in Political Studies. Nothing here is intended to change any SGS rules; instead, the purpose is to add additional requirements not imposed but permitted by the framework laid out in SGS's document "General Forms of Theses":

https://www.queensu.ca/sgs/sites/webpublish.queensu.ca.sgswww/files/files/Students-thesis%20completion/SGS_General_Forms_of_Theses_%20March%202017.pdf

Content

The article-based dissertation must be a coherent examination of a particular intellectual problem, not a series of papers on entirely different topics. It is for this reason that the SGS guidelines require that an article-based dissertation include an introduction that explains "how the various sections/chapters forming the body of the thesis combine to address the main goals of the thesis" and a conclusion that addresses the significance, implications, and potential applications of the thesis' results. In this respect, the article-based dissertation does not differ from the conventional model. What's different about the the article-based dissertation is that the central chapters of the dissertation consist of separate publishable papers on different aspects of the topic, instead of chapters that build one upon the other such that one must be read prior to the next. The papers that constitute an article-based dissertation are separate in that each could be understood independently of the others, whereas the chapters in a traditional format dissertation have a   cumulative or developmental structure.

The article-based dissertation will contain the following elements:

1. *Introduction*: This first chapter defines the problem the papers address, explains the concepts and methods used in the ensuing papers, discusses the existing literature on the general topic, and identifies the original contributions provided by the rest of the thesis. This chapter is not normally intended for publication and should therefore not be referred to extensively in the separate papers. It is, however, written for a scholarly audience. The literature review may be

separated into a distinct chapter.

2. *Three Papers*: The papers that constitute the core of the thesis must be structured so as to be submissable to a recognized refereed journal in the relevant field. They need not be published, but they must be the kind of paper that could be published, and independently, so that in principle all three papers could be published. Although the individual papers should be such that they can be read independently, they should be cross-referenced where appropriate. These papers cannot be co-authored. They may be published in journals before submission of the thesis, but the assessment of journal editors and referees is independent of the assessment the thesis by the dissertation committee.

3. *Conclusion*: The final chapter connects the results of the three papers and discusses the general implications of the research. Like the introduction, it is not normally intended for publication but is to be written for a scholarly audience.

The article-based dissertation will therefore have a minimum of 5 chapters.

Procedure

The default format of the PhD dissertation is the traditional format. However, a candidate may request permission to write an article-based dissertation. Approval lies in the hands of the student's proposal committee.   If the request comes after defense of the proposal, the student should submit a revised thesis summary and chapter / article outline to the original committee.