

RESEARCH DEGREE THESIS GUIDELINES 2025-26

This document can be located on the Research Degrees Blackboard site under the 'Regulations and Procedures' tab.

The university regulates for electronic submission and publication of theses. Theses should be emailed to the Doctoral School at ! RDC admin (if within SHU) or rdcadmin@shu.ac.uk (if external to SHU).

1. INTRODUCTION

Sheffield Hallam University awards research degrees to candidates who meet the award objectives as stated in the Research Degree Regulations. The assessment process is undertaken by an examining team who are approved by the University Research Degrees Committee (RDC) for each individual research degree candidate. Examiners should be nominated by a candidate's Director of Studies at least 4 months in advance of thesis submission.

The assessment comprises two elements: a written thesis and the defence of that through an oral examination. This document provides a guide to research students on the thesis requirements for assessment, submission and publication.

Thesis formats

Sheffield Hallam University permits three thesis formats for Doctoral awards:

- Monograph – a 'traditional' UK format thesis, typically comprising an introduction, literature review, methods and results chapters, and conclusions.
- Article-based – the thesis typically comprises a collection of research articles produced by the Doctoral candidate during their period of registration as a research student, consolidated by an introduction (including an explanation of the research question(s), the research subject, relevant literature and methodology) and a concluding chapter in which the results of the research are summarised and discussed. The thesis typically contains between 3 and 5 articles. At least one of the articles must have been accepted for publication at the point of thesis submission.
- Practice-based – only applicable to specific disciplines, a monograph style thesis with research outputs, e.g. creative works, forming part of the work to be assessed

Additionally, eligible candidates may submit a thesis for a PhD on the basis of prior published works. That route is subject to different Regulations and Procedures, and is not covered here.

For Masters-level awards, the permitted thesis format is monograph only.

Students should discuss these routes with their supervisory team, considering the nature of their research and their research/professional development objectives. Students should also ensure that they meet any requirements stipulated by a funding body or other external partner, where relevant.

Students are asked to indicate at Confirmation of Doctorate (RF2) stage their intended thesis format, although this may be changed at any point up to the approval of examiners (RF3). Students who are intending to submit an article-based thesis should submit an RFAB form to seek approval.

Schools/Institutes may preclude students from this format if they feel it is not appropriate to the academic discipline. Colleges may preclude students from this format if they feel it is not appropriate to the academic discipline.

2. THESIS CONTENT AND WORD COUNT

The thesis provides a written record of the critical investigation and evaluation of the topic of the research programme. Practice-based theses may be accompanied by supplementary material such as artefacts or other creative outputs. The thesis should include information relevant to the candidate's work (for example, previous work in the field); details of the way the investigation was carried out (for example, experimental details); a record and critical appraisal/discussion of results and conclusions. **The research must have full ethics approval before being presented for assessment.**

The university has a suite of research degree awards where the word count of the thesis varies depending on the award. The text in the main body of the thesis should not exceed the **maximum** word count as noted below. The 'main body of the thesis' comprises all content from the Introduction to the Conclusion/ Recommendations, including references, citations, footnotes, and data. Anything outside of this, including the reference list, bibliography, appendices and ancillary data in annexes, does not contribute to the word count.

Regulation R12.9 specifies the maximum word counts (no minimum is specified) as follows:

Monograph style

PhD	80,000 words
MPhil	40,000 words
Professional Doctorate in Business Administration (DBA)	70,000 words
Professional Doctorate in Education (EdD)	60,000 words
Professional Doctorate in Professional Studies (DProf)	50,000 words

Candidates and supervisors are expected to discuss the word count of the thesis to establish disciplinary norms and to meet the expectations of examiners in the field.

Article-based

PhD <i>(including the word count of the articles, which is expected to be 20,000 to 40,000 words)</i>	60,000 to 80,000 words
DBA <i>(including the word count of the articles, which is expected to be 17,500 to 35,000 words)</i>	52,500 to 70,000 words
EdD <i>(including the word count of the articles, which is expected to be 15,000 to 30,000 words)</i>	45,000 to 60,000 words

Creative/practice-based

For monograph submissions where the thesis is accompanied by material in other than written form or the research involves creative writing or the preparation of a scholarly edition, the written thesis should normally be within the range:

PhD	30,000 - 40,000 words
MPhil	15,000 - 20,000 words

3. THESIS FORMATTING

The thesis must be written in English unless approval has been given by RDC to present the thesis in another language.

The following formatting requirements must be adhered to for all thesis formats:

Title Page

(See *Example Title Page* at the end of this document)

PLEASE DO NOT include any images, or the university logo/crest on the Title Page.

The title page must give only the following information:

- i) the full title of the thesis as approved by the Research Degrees Committee;
- ii) the full legal name of the author;
- iii) that the degree is awarded by the University;
- iv) the award for which the degree is submitted in partial fulfilment of its requirements;
- v) the Collaborating Organisation(s), if any; and
- vi) the month and year of the submission of the thesis.

Candidate Declaration

The thesis must include a Candidate Declaration, **located directly after the title page**. There are 5 points for inclusion in the declaration plus a signature box. The template and an example declaration is shown at the end of this document.

Abstract

The thesis must contain an abstract of approximately 300 words which provides a synopsis of the thesis stating the nature and scope of the work undertaken and the contribution made to knowledge in the subject. This should sit after the Title page and the Candidate Declaration and be single spaced.

A separate copy of the abstract must also be submitted with the thesis. The separate copy of the abstract must have the name of the author, the degree for which the thesis is submitted, and the title of the thesis as a heading.

Table of Contents

The table of contents will comprise the titles of the principal subdivisions of the thesis and of any annexes, such as bibliography, reference pages etc., together with the page numbers on which these appear.

Layout

The thesis must be typed, and the size of character used in the main text, including displayed matter and notes, must not be less than a font size of 12. Suggested fonts are Aptos, Arial and Calibri.

Although the university does not require candidates to submit hard copy theses, the examiners may request a printed copy for assessment, therefore the margin size must be set as follows:

left (binding edge)	40mm
others	20mm

Pages must be numbered consecutively through the main text including photographs and/or diagrams included as whole pages; page numbers must be positioned centrally at the bottom of the page, 20 mm above the edge.

Line spacing: one-and-a-half or double spacing should be used throughout, except for indented quotations or footnotes where single spacing may be used.

References must be in an established referencing style appropriate to the academic conventions of the subject area. Advice can be obtained from candidate's supervisory team or Library staff.

Pictures, photographs and diagrams can be included in the thesis where appropriate, in whichever font or format is appropriate. Good practice when using images is to add alternative text (alt text) for digital accessibility purposes, which helps users of screen readers access your thesis. Refer to 4.2.4 for information on copyright.

Additional information for article-based thesis

Please refer to the separate Article-Based thesis guidance document – which is available on the Research Degrees Blackboard site [via this link](#).

4. THESIS SUBMISSION REQUIREMENTS

4.1 E-SUBMISSION OF THESES FOR THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

Research degree theses should be submitted for assessment as a pdf file, along with a separate copy of your abstract by email to the ! RDC admin or rdcadmin@shu.ac.uk inbox.

4.2 THE SUBMISSION OF THESES IN THEIR FINAL FORMAT AFTER THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS HAS BEEN COMPLETED

After the recommendation of the award of the degree by the examining team and once any amendments have been completed satisfactorily and approved by the examiner(s), then candidates are required to submit a final Version of Record of their thesis to the University.

4.2.1 E-THESIS

The University regulations stipulate the submission and preservation of e-theses as the final Version of Record. The benefits of e-thesis submission to research degree graduates, and in turn to the university, are that the discoverability of the research is greatly enhanced. It assists in publicising the work of all our researchers and should help individuals in establishing their academic reputation in their chosen research field. This in turn enhances the University's research profile by showcasing its research strengths.

When the Vice-Chancellor confers a research degree award and RDC notifies candidates of this, they will be sent a Thesis Deposit Agreement (TDA) form. Candidates will need to complete this and submit it together with the electronic version of record of their thesis as a PDF/A file to rdcadmin@shu.ac.uk

E-theses will be made available via the University's Research Archive (SHURA, <https://shura.shu.ac.uk>) and an electronic copy of the thesis will also be included in the British Library Electronic Theses Online Service (EThOS <http://ethos.bl.uk>).

The candidate's Director of Studies is responsible for sending a link to the thesis to any Collaborating Organisation.

4.2.2 EMBARGO PERIOD

Unless a research degree candidate specifies otherwise, the e-thesis will be available online immediately. However, candidates can delay electronic access to their thesis for a period of up to 1 year from their date of award. A record of the thesis will exist in SHURA, but no-one will be able to read the thesis until the end of the embargo period. Candidates who need a longer embargo period will have to obtain formal approval from the Head of Research Degrees in their College and confirm their approval with the TDA form.

4.2.3 CONFIDENTIALITY

RDC may agree that a confidentiality restriction is placed on the thesis for a specified period. In such cases for the duration of the period, the full text of the thesis will not be made available on SHURA. Instead, for the duration of the confidentiality period, only the author's name, their supervisors' names, the department/research centre, thesis title, research degree award and year of submission will be published.

RDC may approve an application for confidentiality normally only in order to enable a patent application to be lodged, to protect commercially or politically sensitive material, or to protect material which may result in competitive advantage. However, the thesis must not be restricted in this way in order to protect researchers and research leads. Although the normal maximum period of confidentiality restriction is two years, in exceptional circumstances RDC may approve a longer period. However, where a shorter period would be adequate, RDC will not automatically grant confidentiality for two years.

4.2.4 COPYRIGHT IN THE THESIS

Details of copyright in the electronic thesis can be found in the guide [Copyright and your electronic thesis](#)

The guide outlines copyright issues in relation to research and publishing the thesis electronically as Open Access in the SHU Research Archive (SHURA).

It outlines any copyright considerations that candidates need to consider whilst writing up their thesis. This may include contacting any copyright holders of third-party items used in the thesis - it is important to start seeking permissions as soon as possible.

Further guidance is available from the following link to the Research Degrees Blackboard site. [E-Theses and Copyright Guidance](#)

4.2.5 DISSEMINATION OF THESES VIA PROQUEST DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

Sheffield Hallam University has an agreement with ProQuest's Dissertations and Theses database. Candidates' theses can be automatically added to this database so that their thesis will sit alongside theses from other leading institutions, including those in the official thesis repository of the US Library of Congress.

If candidates choose to do this, their thesis will also be indexed in over 30 subject databases in a wide variety of disciplines. This means that the thesis will be discoverable and retrievable by a global audience.

ProQuest offer one-off sales of print-on-demand, microform or PDF versions of theses to individuals. A royalty of 10% of individual sales of copies is payable to the author when the accrued royalties reach \$25. You can claim these royalties from ProQuest if you wish to do so by contacting them directly at disspub@proquest.com .

Individuals will retain all their rights as an author and can contact the University or ProQuest at any time to request take-down of their thesis. There are no costs.

4.2.6 HARD BINDING

(this is optional, after examination when the research degree award has been confirmed)

Whilst the University does not require a hard copy of the final thesis, candidates can choose to print a copy of the thesis for their own purposes. For example, some candidates may wish to present a copy to their supervisors or family members.

If candidates choose to do this, then the University's Print Shop can arrange to have the thesis bound in a set way, for a fee, as below:

- purple binders cloth (the code is Pantone 268U) with gold lettering.
- The front cover would normally bear the title of the thesis, the name and initials of the candidate, the degree, and the year of submission (or in the case of a re-examination, the year of resubmission) in at least 24 pt type.
- The spine of the thesis would bear the same information (excluding the title of work) reading downwards.

See example below:

Front Cover

**Friend or Foe: The conundrum of
utilising AI in creative writing**

HALLAM. A PhD 2025

Spine (top to bottom)

HALLAM. A PhD 2025

Agreed by:

Research Degrees Committee, in line with Research Degree Regulations 2025-26

Example Title Page

Friend or Foe: The conundrum of utilising AI in creative writing

Anthony Hallam

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of
Sheffield Hallam University
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

October 2025

Candidate Declaration

Please use the options marked with a * as appropriate and include in your thesis after the Title Page (see example declaration layout on page 3).

I hereby declare that:

(Concurrent registration for two or more academic awards)

*[Either:]**

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.

*[Or:]**

1. I have been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree. I was an enrolled student for the following award:

Name of award:

Awarding body:

(Material submitted for another award)

*[Either:]**

2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.

*[Or:]**

2. The following material contained in the thesis formed part of a submission for the following award:

Name of award:

Awarding body:

Material submitted for that award:

*[Please list the material contained in the present thesis that has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification at any university or institution of learning. It should be clear what proportion of the present thesis was submitted elsewhere.]**

(Authorship and Collaboration)

3. I certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged. I confirm that I have sought and obtained copyright permission for any third party materials included in this thesis.

[Where a candidate's research programme is part of a collaborative project, the thesis must clearly indicate in addition the candidate's individual contribution and the extent of the collaboration. For example:

*"The data presented in this thesis was obtained in an experiment carried out by the [name of collaboration] in [location of experiment/where collaboration happened]. I played a major role in the preparation and execution of the experiment, and the data analysis and interpretation are entirely my own work. Any contributions from colleagues in the collaboration, such as diagrams or calibrations, are explicitly referenced in the text."]**

[You must acknowledge use of generative AI in your work. Failure to acknowledge use of AI tools could constitute research misconduct. Please refer to the guidance on use of generative AI in assessments on the Research Degrees Blackboard site.]

You should include the relevant option below:]

[Either:]

- I confirm that no AI tools were used in the preparation or completion of this assessment. This submission aligns with AITS 1 of the Artificial Intelligence Transparency Scale (AITS).

[Or:]

- I used AI at AITS 2 (AI for Shaping) of the Artificial Intelligence Transparency Scale (AITS). I acknowledge the use of <insert AI system(s) name and URL> to <brief description of how you used the tool>.

[If your research project involves the use of AI, you may in addition select:]

- [For research projects involving AI only] AI-generated materials have been included in this submission. I acknowledge the use of <insert AI system(s) name and URL> to <brief description of how you used the tool>.

(Research conduct)

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy, and ethics approval has been granted for all research studies in the thesis, as shown in the table below.

Ethics review reference number	Title of research study	Approval date	Date of any post-approval amendments (if applicable)

(Word count)

5. The word count of the thesis is

(Signature)

Please complete electronically:

Name	
Award	
Date of Submission	
College	
Director(s) of Studies	

[Example] Candidate Declaration

I hereby declare that:

1. I have not been enrolled for another award of the University, or other academic or professional organisation, whilst undertaking my research degree.
2. None of the material contained in the thesis has been used in any other submission for an academic award.
3. I certify that this thesis is my own work. The use of all published or other sources of material consulted have been properly and fully acknowledged. I confirm that I have sought and obtained copyright permission for any third party materials included in this thesis.

I used AI at AITS 2 (AI for Shaping) of the Artificial Intelligence Transparency Scale (AITS). I acknowledge the use of Microsoft Copilot <https://copilot.microsoft.com/> to check the spelling and grammar in all sections of my thesis.

4. The work undertaken towards the thesis has been conducted in accordance with the SHU Principles of Integrity in Research and the SHU Research Ethics Policy, and ethics approval has been granted for all research studies in the thesis, as shown in the table below.

Ethics review reference number	Title of research study	Approval date	Date of any post-approval amendments (if applicable)

5. The word count of the thesis is 50,000.

Name	<i>Full legal name as per title page of thesis</i>
Date	<i>Month and Year of thesis submission as per title page of thesis</i>
Award	<i>Type of research degree i.e. PhD, DBA etc.</i>
College	<i>i.e. Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences</i>
Director(s) of Studies	<i>i.e. Professor Amanda Hallam</i>