Presenting your thesis as a series of papers – to do or not to do....

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What does “Presenting as a Series of Papers” mean?

- At UWA you usually can’t simply bind a collection of papers together and submit them, no matter how many or how good they are.

- What you submit must be coherent and tell a story, ie it must be a “thesis” in the traditional sense of the word - it must present an argument and demonstrate knowledge, understanding and wisdom as well as data and information.

- Usually you will have to write some additional text, even if you have already published all your findings.
Data, knowledge, information and wisdom

• Data are not information, information is not knowledge, knowledge is not understanding and understanding is not wisdom. (Russell Ackoff)
Data, knowledge, information and wisdom

• **Data**: the stuff we measure and record
• **Information**: data that are processed to be useful; provides answers to *how much, which, what, when, where, who* questions.
• **Knowledge**: application of data and information; answers *how* questions.
• **Understanding**: appreciation of *why*.
• **Wisdom**: evaluated understanding *why it is (or is not) important, and what it means in the total scheme of things*
What do the Rules say about this?

• 1.3.1.33(1) A thesis may be presented in the form of a typescript, a published book or a paper or series of papers which have been published in refereed journals.

• ...

• (4) If a series of papers is presented, there must be a full explanatory introduction and a review article at the end to link the separate papers and to place them in the context of the established body of knowledge.

• (5) If detailed data and descriptions of methods are not otherwise given, they must be included as appendices.
What do the Rules mean?

• A thesis may consist of work that is:
  • all published
  • partly published
  • all or partly in the process of being published
  • published in a mixture of scholarly and other media
  • published in parallel
  • some mixture of the above
  • wholly unpublished (but not wholly unpublishable, if it is a PhD)
Publishing in Parallel

• It is ok to present information (and knowledge, understanding and wisdom!) in different ways in your thesis and in work that you publish.

• Some students prefer to write all or some papers and thesis chapters in parallel, so that the thesis chapter is an expanded form of the published paper.

• Other students present some or all of their published work in their theses exactly as it was published.
Publishing in Parallel (cont’d)

• It is ok to present work in your thesis in a different order than that in which you undertook it or published it, and in different combinations of data and interpretations.
Non-negotiable Rules

• You must behave ethically in every aspect of what you do.
• You must communicate what you have done, clearly and precisely, to the University and your examiners.
Reasons to Present your Thesis as Papers

• resolves conflicts between preparing the thesis for examination and preparing papers for publication
• increases the probability that you will publish the work
• you can use reviewers' comments on your papers to improve your thesis: quality & confidence
• having part of the work published prior to examination establishes it as worthy of publication, which is one of the criteria for thesis examination. The larger the proportion that is published, the easier it is for your examiners and the BGRS to recognise that your work is substantial and of value.
Possible Problems

• A thesis is more than a collection of papers. The chapters of the thesis can stand alone, but the thesis is a complete and coherent "story", in which each chapter is an integral part. The chapters must be in a logical order and strongly linked together.

• It is easy for a thesis like this to become disjointed. This will stand against it, as a thesis is not the same as a body of work.

• copyright issues (not yet encountered at UWA)
What You Can Do to Improve Coherence

• Choose the order of the chapters carefully. Use a storyboard or other outlining technique to decide the order of the main points of the story well beforehand, and update this as you go.

• Introduce each new chapter with a foreword which introduces the chapter and establishes its links to previous chapters. This could be in the introduction to each chapter.

• The chapters could contain internal references to each other, much as in a published article you would cite other references.

• Write the General Introduction and Discussion and linking sections very carefully, with the major aim to help the readers negotiate the story (knowledge, understanding and wisdom) as well as the data and information.
In general, every thesis should include a:

- **General Introduction** which sets out the context of the thesis and explains the organisation and structure of the thesis; and
- **General Discussion** which draws together the main findings of the thesis in the context of previous research, and establishes the significance of the work.

These chapters assist in establishing the thesis as a coherent whole and are required under the Rules for theses presented as a series of papers.
Structure (cont’d)

- You should include a section at the front of the thesis entitled "Publications arising from this thesis" (or similar words), where you list the published and submitted papers that have arisen from the work in the thesis. After each publication in the list, cite which part of the thesis it represents, e.g.

  - Publications Arising from this Thesis
  - Student and Teacher (2003) Effect of number of published papers on pass rate of PhD theses *Journal of Higher Education* 22, 23-33 (Chapter 2 and part of Chapter 3)
  - Student, Faithful and Silley (2003) Influence of font size on pass rates of PhD theses *Journal of Higher Education* 22, 34-45 (Chapter 6)
Co-Authorship

- Where papers included in your thesis have multiple authors it is important that you indicate very clearly which portions of the paper/s are your work and which are the work of your co-authors. There is a Declaration Form for this purpose.

- You are required to obtain the signed consent of your co-authors, if possible, to include the work in your thesis.
Formatting

• The formatting in the thesis should be uniform so that the thesis as a whole has a professional appearance. However, the internal headings, and therefore the structure, might differ quite widely between chapters.