

Publication-based Thesis: what the examiners think

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What are the differences between the reasons for an examiner reading a thesis and a researcher reviewing a paper?

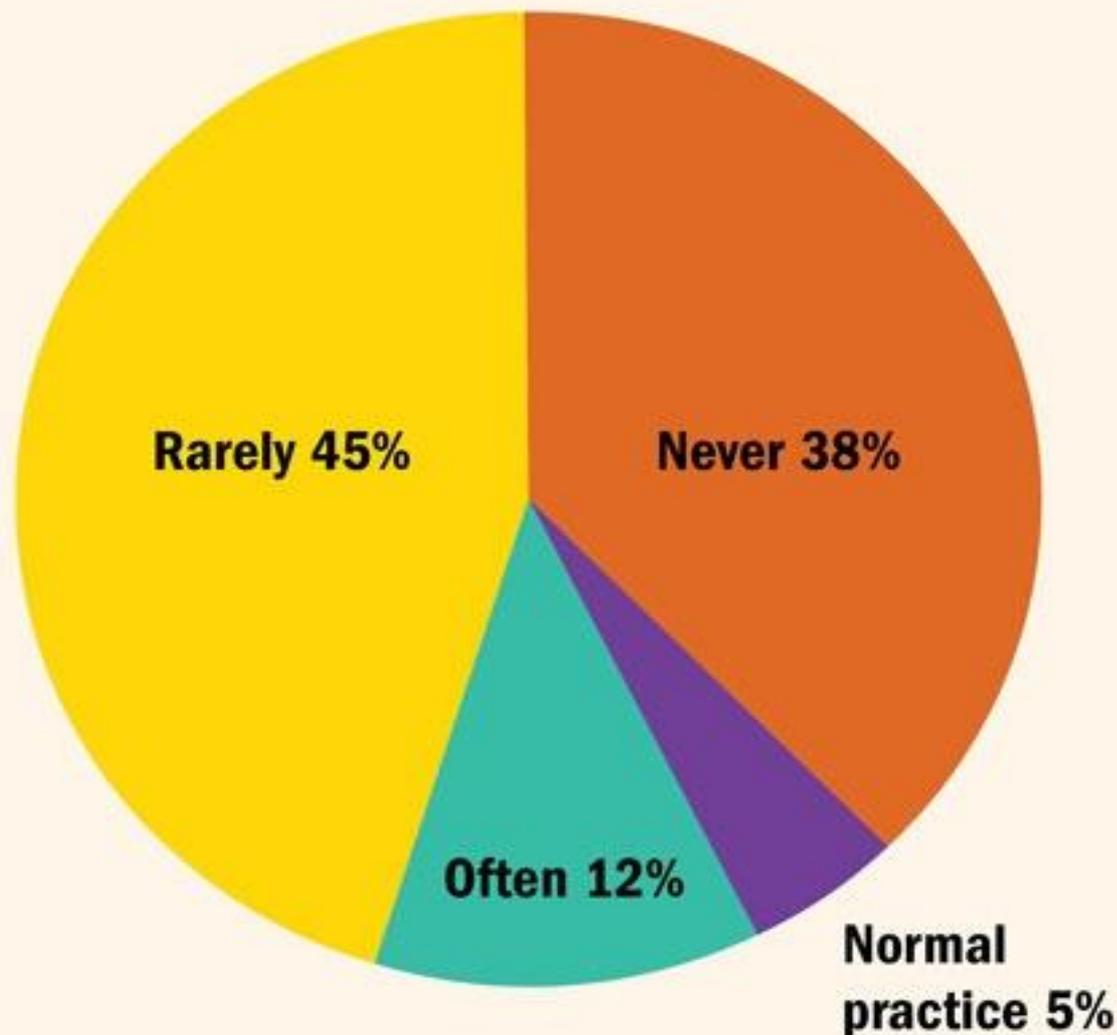
How does this affect the focus of their reading?

Typology of publication-based theses

- PhD by publication/compilation
 - Thesis consists entirely of published papers (not allowed at JCU except for 'staff PhD')
- Integrated thesis
 - Data chapters comprise published papers plus thesis introduction and discussion.
- Hybrid thesis
 - Publications are inserted in lieu of all/some chapters with appropriate formatting to achieve a common style plus thesis introduction and discussion.
- Thesis with appended papers
 - Aspects of the thesis have been published and are appended to the monograph style thesis
- Self-Citation thesis
 - Thesis in which the candidate's published work is cited but not reproduced.

How frequently do your PhD publications incorporate published papers?

UK 2015



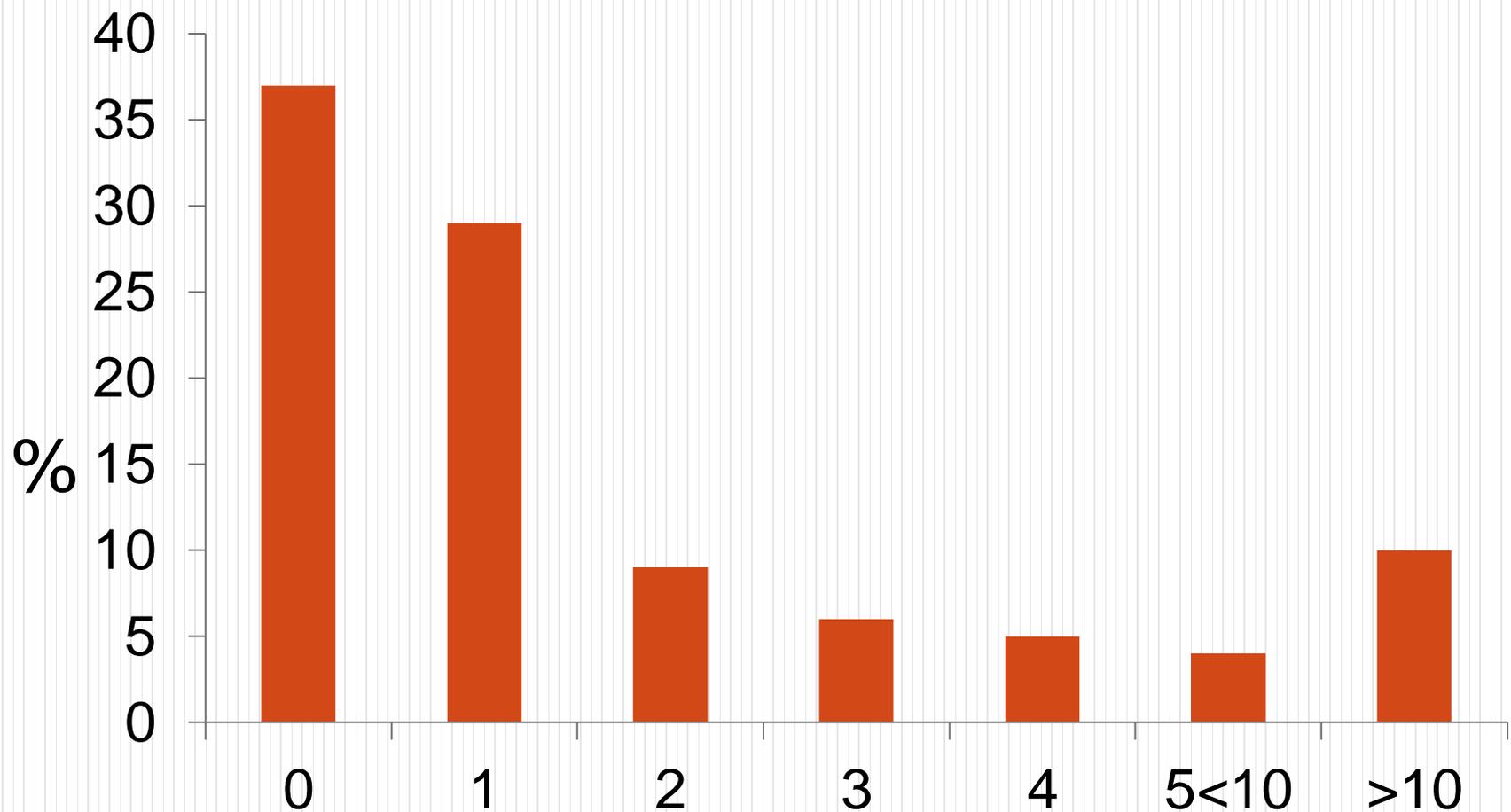
Source: UK Council for Graduate Education, *The Role of Publications and Other Artefacts in Submissions for the UK PhD*, 2015

How frequently is published material included in a PhD thesis ?

	Arts/ Humanities and Social Science	Science/ Applied Science
No papers	57%	27%
Sole author	37%	2%
Co-author	6%	71%

UWA data n=60

How many publications are included in a thesis?



publications

UWA data n=60

On what does Australian Qualifications Framework require examiners to focus?

Research Doctorate

- **Capacity** to apply a substantial body of knowledge to research, investigate and develop new knowledge, in one or more fields of investigation, scholarship or professional practice.

Research Masters .

- **Capacity** to apply an advanced body of knowledge in a range of contexts for research and scholarship and as a pathway for further learning.

All HDR theses

- Originality of the research data and/or analysis of the data;
- **Coherence of argument and presentation;**
- **Technical and conceptual competence** in analysis and presentation; and
- **Critical knowledge** of the relevant literature.

What do examiner's say?	With pubs	Without pubs
Lack of coherence	18%	23%
Unnecessary repetition	32%	23%
Omissions- not enough detail of in introduction, methods and discussion	58%	45%
Evidence of publication is positive	40%	
Concern that thesis concerns little published work	10%	
Publication leaves me nothing to consider	1%	UWA unpublished data; Sharmini et al. 2014
Hard to determine candidate's contribution	68%	

JCU guidelines

Thesis must include a statement for each publication that:

- clearly specifies the extent to which the original research was undertaken by the candidate rather than the co-authors,
and
- gives full acknowledgement to the contributions of others

Qualitative statements less risky than
quantitative statements

NZ universities move to oral examinations
influenced by this issue

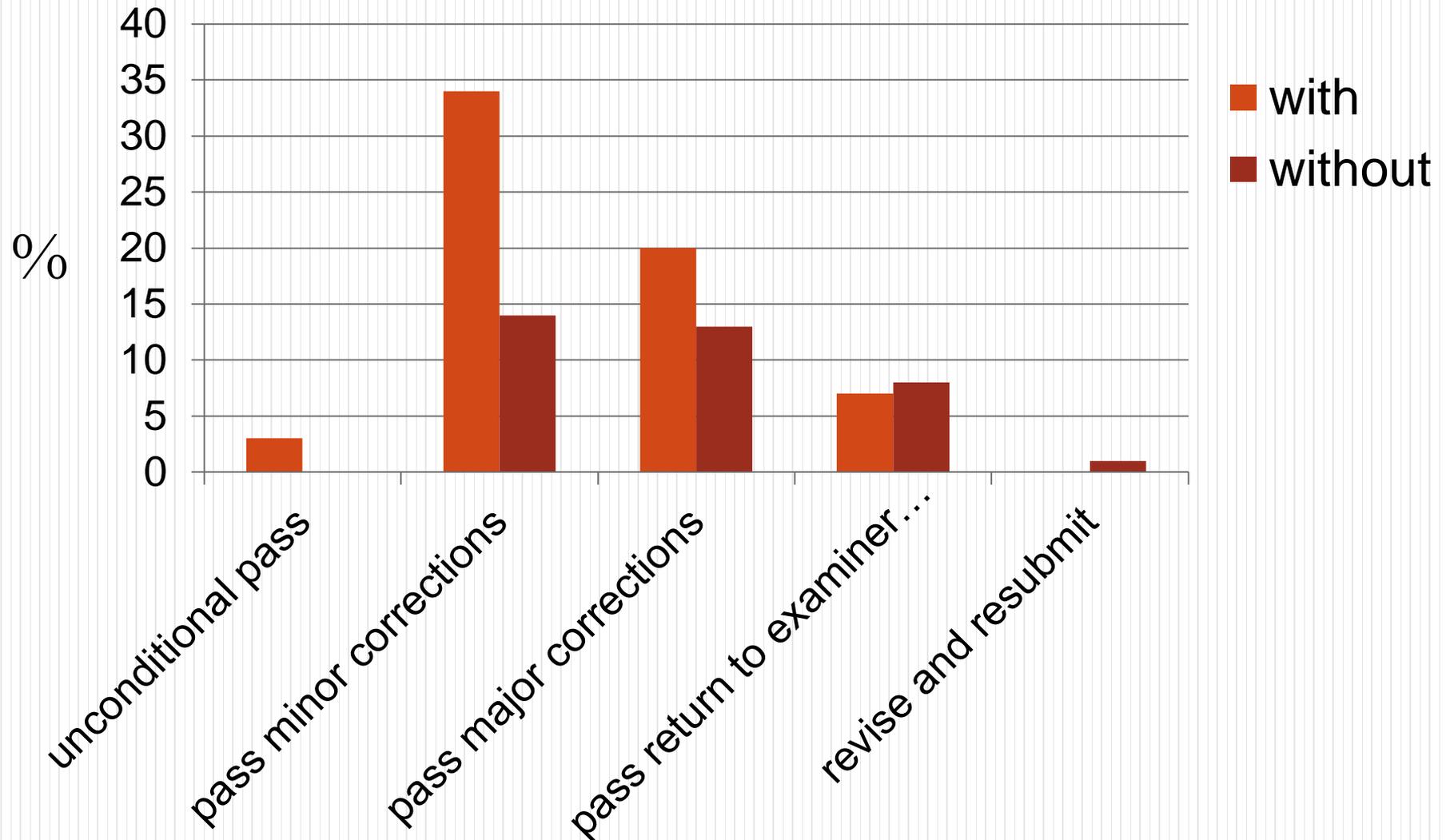
Example of statement of contribution of others

Thesis chapter	Publication on which based	Role of each author
7	Grech, A., and Marsh, H. (2008) Rapid assessment of risks to a mobile marine mammal in an ecosystem-scale marine protected area, <i>Conservation Biology</i> 22: 711-720.	Grech and Marsh designed the study together. Grech conducted the analysis based on data collected by Marsh and wrote the chapter; Marsh assisted with the development of the rapid assessment approach, interpretation of results and editing.

Hypothetical example of quantitative statement of contribution of others

Thesis chapter	Publication on which based	Role of each author
7	<p>Grech, A., and Marsh, H. (2008) Rapid assessment of risks to a mobile marine mammal in an ecosystem-scale marine protected area, <i>Conservation Biology</i> 22: 711-720.</p>	<p><u>Introduction</u> Grech 50% Marsh 50%</p> <p><u>Methods</u> Grech 50% Marsh 50%</p> <p><u>Results</u> Grech 80% Marsh 20%</p> <p><u>Discussion</u> Grech 35% Marsh 65%</p>

Does publication improve examination outcomes?



UWA data n=60

Avoiding accusations of self-plagiarism in publication-based thesis

- https://www.researchgate.net/post/How_much_Self_Plagiarism_allowed_for_PhD_Thesis
- Acknowledge source of the work
- This chapter is based on the following published paper:
Grech, A, & Marsh, H. 2008. Rapid assessment of risks to a mobile marine mammal in an ecosystem-scale marine protected area. *Conservation Biology* 22: 711-720.
- This chapter is a refocussed and updated edited extract from ‘*The ecology and conservation of Sirenia: dugongs and manatees*’ by Helene Marsh, Tom O’Shea and John Reynolds III, published in 2011 by Cambridge University Press reprinted with permission.

Pros and Cons of Writing Data Chapters of Thesis as Papers

Pros

- Benefit of input from the journal review process
- Improves candidate's CV – essential for research or academic career in some disciplines – **index of potential as a researcher**
- Improves likelihood of positive examiners' reports

Cons

- More acceptable in some disciplines than others
- Takes time – may be tradeoff between timely completion and 'publishing as you go'- hybrid option
- May increase the chances of unintentional plagiarism – additional care required

Advice to candidates

- Is including publications in the thesis common (or expected)?

Increasingly yes, especially in the sciences/applied sciences

- How many (planned) publications do I need?

Depends on discipline, project and publication type. Examiners may be concerned by low levels of publication.

- Will including publications 'guarantee that my thesis is passed / minimize need for corrections'?

No but, it will improve your chances

JCU thesis guide

- If data chapters are presented as series of papers (published or unpublished)
 - Chapters should preferably be presented in coherent format (reprints bound together less reader friendly).
 - Papers may be co-authored but student should be senior authored on at least 75% (usually all)
 - Intellectual thread of the thesis should be outlined in the introduction and synthesised in the general discussion **which must by substantively written by candidate alone**

Don't forget the differences in the reasons for an examiner reading a thesis and a researcher reviewing a paper

Questions?