How much should I publish during my research degree?

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Wagga Wagga
My (publishing) story

SCOOPED!!


Ring-Opened Adducts of the Anticancer Drug Carboplatin with Sulfur Amino Acids

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- no. of pubs from PhD: 5
- no. of pubs with HDR students: 49 (out of 96)
What does it mean to “publish”?

• peer-review journal article
• peer-review conference presentation
• creative work
• professional magazine article
• book chapter
• major report
• etc.
• focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles
Why publish at all?

- a research degree is about creating new knowledge. ∴ it is exciting to share that knowledge
- if it’s not published who would know about your discoveries?
- taxpayers fund the research, ∴ I believe that it is important to give something back to the community (i.e. more than the thesis itself)
- other?
Why publish during candidature?

• to obtain early peer review
  o if your work has been peer-reviewed during candidature you have an opportunity to have your work/ideas tested by reviewers prior to examination
  o it makes it harder for an examiner to find major faults with the work

• the development of writing skills

• it can help clarify research aims and the thesis questions (but it can also obscure the “big picture”)

• building a track record as an early-career researcher
Are there any pitfalls to publishing during candidature?

- can be a distraction from actually doing the research
- can lead to a lack of coherence in the thesis/argument – too many bite-sized chunks may not make a whole (e.g. traditional medicinal plants)
- what happens if the manuscript is rejected?
- benefits greatly outweigh any potential downsides
How much should I publish?

• two extremes: as little as possible, as often as possible,
• the so-called “MPU” minimum publishable unit versus one voluminous tome
• the “Goldilocks”
• what is usual in your area?
• how novel is your work—a rapid, short communication may be necessary to claim the territory
• no right answer to this question
• try and work it out with your supervisory team
Thesis by publication

• promoted at a QPR Conference in 2010
• too little PG research was being disseminated in peer-reviewed publications • not readily accessible to other researchers
• solution – make it more attractive for HDR candidates to publish prior to submission (i.e. offer thesis by publication)
• my experience as a supervisor:
  o worked well with the first student who wanted to go this path
  o hasn’t worked well since
  o puts students under a lot of pressure and becomes a goal in itself, rather than the natural outcome of doing a good project
  o my advice now – work hard, do the best research that can be done, if there are a number of manuscripts published and/or near submission then submit by publication, otherwise submit a traditional thesis.
Conclusion

• peer-reviewed publications are important for you, CSU, and as a contribution to new knowledge
• publishing during candidature has a number of advantages
• you need to know what is considered acceptable in your discipline to answer the question “How much?”
THANKYOU!
THE END
Sources

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PUBLISHING DURING YOUR PHD:

when and how much?

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Docfest 2016
Early and often!

• for disciplines in which journal articles are the primary means of disseminating research

• the days of producing a 100,000 word tome of a thesis are gone

• the end product of your PhD candidature ought to be the collection of publications you produce

• book ended by an introduction and conclusion that elucidate the central thesis of your work
Why?

• your supervisor/s, your examiners (and maybe your partner) will read your thesis

• they may well be the only people on the planet to ever read your thesis, cover to cover

• if you don’t want all your hard work to disappear into obscurity you must publish it in digestible pieces
But why not after?

• leaving publication until after submission greatly decreases the likelihood that it will ever happen at all

• puts the work you did early on more and more out of date

• and your examiners will be familiar with your field, familiarity with you and your work via previous publications will smooth the examination process
But why not after?

- leaving publication until after submission greatly decreases the likelihood that it will ever happen at all

- puts the work you did early on more and more out of date

- and puts a stay on your career

- at the submission of your thesis you need to begin your academic career by hitting the ground running

- not by hitting the ground like a sack of wet flour
But I don’t intend to pursue an academic career?

• your supervisor does

• a whole lot of other people do and the academy (and your candidature) are supported by public funds

• publication subjects your work to the rigours of both pre- and post- peer review

• as PhDs become more common, publications will become the acid test of the quality of a higher degree by research