SIAT Guidelines

WRITING A CUMULATIVE THESIS

Produced by the SIAT Graduate Program Committee, 6 November 2013, amended May 2021

This document is adjunct to SIAT’s calendar entry and to SFU’s Graduate General Regulations. It describes SIAT’s normal practice with respect to the topic it addresses.

It has been approved by SIAT’s Graduate Caucus.

The PhD and Masters thesis may have the form of a monograph (i.e., the classic thesis format of one single document), or of a compilation with a number of scholarly peer-reviewed articles (“cumulative thesis”). Students should always consult early on with their senior supervisor and committee, who will discuss with them and decide what form of thesis is the most suitable for a given case.

Please note that, the guidelines suggested here are to outline possible criteria and courses of actions when preparing a cumulative thesis. The students’ supervisory committee might have different criteria or requirements and will decide on what contributions constitute a thesis.

1. In the case of a cumulative thesis, the selected scholarly articles are to be connected by an initial introduction chapter (explaining the subject and scope of the work and how the different articles contribute) and a summative final discussion chapter (that includes the overall contributions, main conclusions, and an outlook). This serves to interrelate the contributions as well as discuss and draw conclusions from the entire work. The publications need to be integrated as chapters into the theme of the thesis and must deal with the overall topic of the thesis. The thesis should have continuous pagination and an aggregated bibliography. The individual papers may still have their own bibliography in addition.

2 a) Phd Thesis: The PhD thesis should have a content and depth corresponding to a classic (monograph-style) thesis. E.g., this might be achieved by about 3-6 peer-reviewed conference papers, journal articles, or other written scholarly contributions of high value where the supervisory committee assesses the quality as being appropriate. The articles should maintain such a level that they could be accepted for publication in an international scholarly journal with a rigorous referee procedure. At least two of these articles should already have been accepted for publication or be published. All may already be published. For published articles, the comprehensive bibliographic reference should be stated. For accepted or submitted manuscripts, the venue and date of acceptance/submission should be included.

2 b) Masters thesis: The Masters thesis should have a content and depth corresponding to a classic (monograph-style) thesis. E.g., this might be achieved by at least 2 peer-reviewed conference papers, journal articles, or other scholarly written contributions of high value where the supervisory committee assesses the quality as being appropriate. The articles should maintain such a level that they could be accepted for publication in an international scholarly journal with a rigorous referee procedure. All of these articles need to be submissible (as judged by the supervisory committee), submitted, accepted, or published. For published articles, the comprehensive bibliographic reference should be stated. For accepted or submitted manuscripts, the venue and date of acceptance/submission should be included.
3. The individual articles may have been written together with the main supervisor, another supervisor or other persons. In order to show that the candidate has attained the intended proficiency, the majority of the articles must have been written by the candidate personally (which should normally result in first authorship) and comprise a substantial part of the thesis as a whole. The thesis should be accompanied by a detailed description of all the authors’ contributions to each of the articles.

4. In terms of its scholarly contribution, a cumulative thesis in its entirety shall satisfy the same academic requirements as a thesis in the form of a monograph. Any submission of constituent parts that had been published/submitted/written before the student started his/her doctoral/masters studies or is primarily based on prior work may be included to contextualize the thesis if properly declared, but typically does not count towards the scholarly contribution of the thesis.

5. Before your article is published by a publisher, you can attempt to retain specific rights to your work through a publication agreement addendum, such as the SPARC Canadian Author Addendum. If you did not retain rights to re-use your article, you can request permission to include your article in your thesis by emailing or writing to the copyright holder, explaining how and why you want to use the work and requesting permission. If granted permission, you should keep a record of who gave the permission, what was permitted, the date, and how to contact the person who gave the permission. A copy of each relevant copyright release must be included in your Thesis Package. If the publisher will not grant you permission, it may still be possible to use the content of the pre-print or post-print of your article, depending on the publisher’s copyright policies outlined in the publisher’s copyright transfer / author publication agreement, many of which can be found on the SHERPA/RoMEO website. You can find the latest information about copyright on the Copyright at SFU website. If you have questions about retaining or obtaining copyright permission, you can always contact your liaison librarian.