14. Introduction of PhD by Publication
Research

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Introduction

An increased volume of requests for an improved offering for thesis examinations and the requirement for doctoral research to be of publishable quality led to a desire to introduce a PhD by Publication programme within RCSI. Formats that encourage candidates towards peer-reviewed publication prospectively, rather than retrospectively, are considered important for career progression. This option can also prevent duplication of effort by enabling work done in the preparation of a manuscript for publication to be recognised. The thesis by publication was introduced in 2019 following an international benchmarking exercise and stakeholder engagement across the institution.

Initiative

Before implementing this change, several quality processes were undertaken. A benchmarking exercise was undertaken in 2017 to review best practice and standards for thesis by publication across three Irish Universities, three Russell Group and Oxbridge UK Universities and two high-ranking European Universities (KTH Royal Institute of Technology and Karolinska, Sweden). Following discussion of the review findings, the initial focus was on introducing thesis-by-publication for registered PhD students for works published during their registration period.
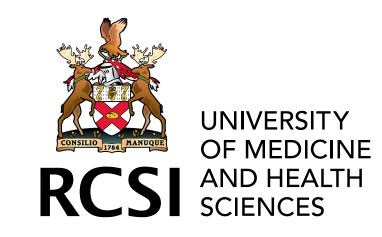
A policy document was drafted to support the proposal which was circulated to key staff for comment; meetings further informed this phase. The proposal was submitted to the A&QC for discussion with recommendation for further stakeholder engagement in relation to eligibility criteria i.e., specification of the number and quality of journal articles that could be considered, co-authorship challenges, specification of the authority for approving a thesis for submission by this route. Wider stakeholder engagement was undertaken on these issues. Comments were invited at Supervisor Fora attended by PIs across RCSI academic and clinical sites in February 2018. Further engagement with RCSI PIs was undertaken in March 2018 in online fora to maximise engagement was undertaken in March 2018. The proposal was revised to incorporate all contributions and resubmitted to A&QC and presented as a discussion item to Academic Council, who approved progression to MHSB.
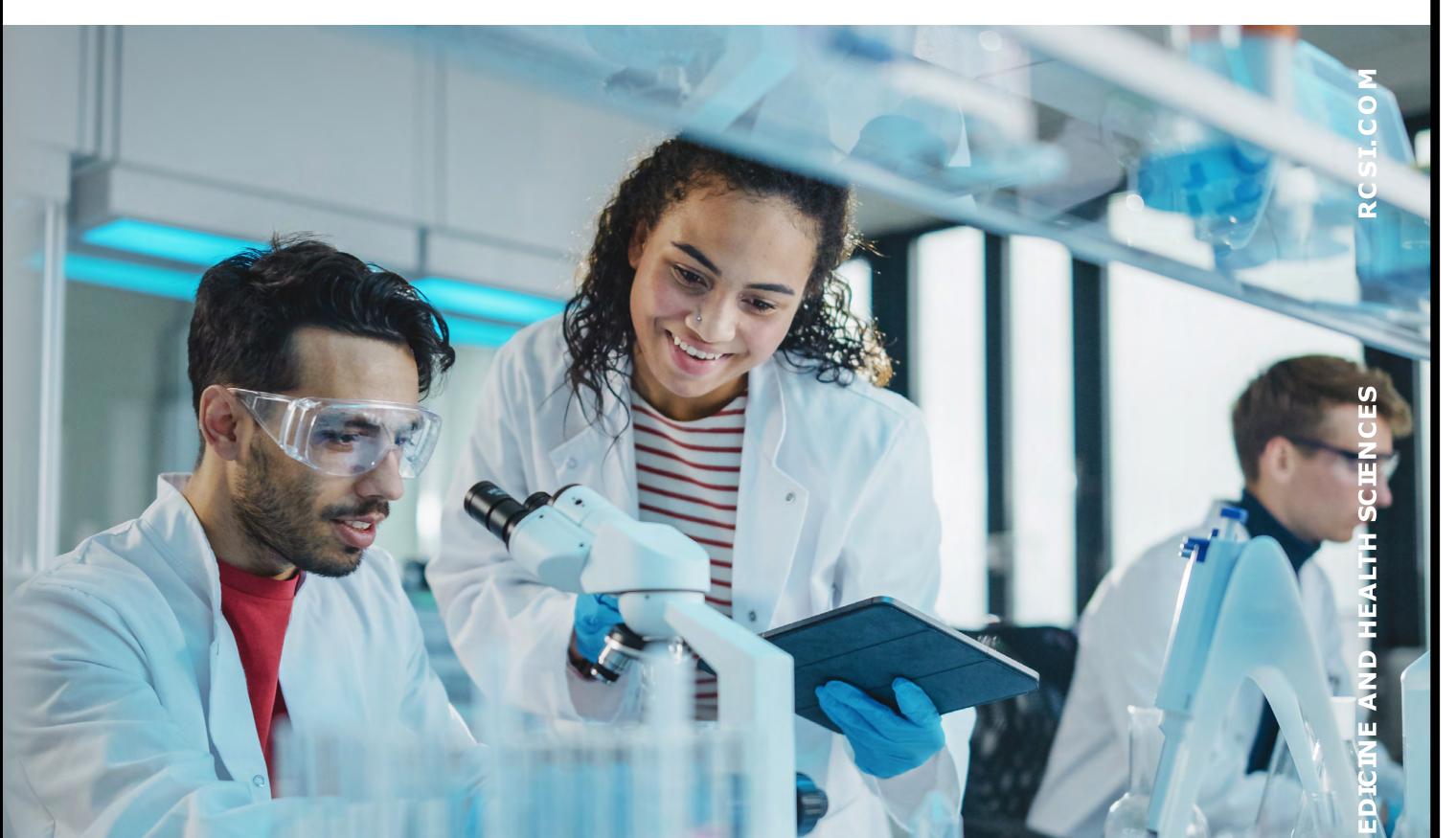
Outcome

The final proposal received approval by RCSI and NUI senate in January and February 2019. RCSI's first four PhDs by publication were awarded in October 2019. There has been significant demand for this programme with 33 PGRs having completed their thesis by this route, by November 2022. The availability of options and flexibility in thesis presentation has been well-received by supervisors and PGRs.

The availability of PhD by publication paved the way towards approval of MD by publication in March 2020 and MD/PhD by prior published works in March 2021. The MD/PhD by publication has opened an additional route that recognises peer-reviewed work completed within the programme timelines. This has added benefits in terms of both RCSI's publication metrics and in increasing the number of level 10 awards affiliated to RCSI. As of January 2023, RCSI has 1 MD and 4 PhD students registered for this programme, for completion May/October 2023.

PhD BY **PRIOR PUBLICATION**
SCHOLAR INFORMATION

RCSI UNIVERSITY OF MEDICINE AND HEALTH SCIENCES

RCSI is pleased to offer the opportunity to those with a record of publications in biomedical, clinical and health services research to complete a PhD by Prior Published works.

This route allows scholars who have sufficient research experience at doctoral level, as demonstrated through already published material, to gain academic recognition for their work over a minimum registration period of one year. Researchers who have published their own original research, which examiners deem has made a significant contribution to knowledge, can obtain a PhD award in recognition of this work when it is presented in the form of a coherent thesis and successfully assessed in a *viva voce* examination.