



PhDs Including Prior Publications: Quality Assurance and Risks

Professor Jane Stadler (UNE), Professor Peta Mitchell (QUT), Professor Susan Kinnear (CQU)

Overview

- PhD models that include publications: requirements and risks.
- **GenAI, Authorship & Academic Publishing** (Mitchell)
- **CQU Model: PhD by Portfolio** (Kinneer)
- **Quality assurance** from entry requirements and course design, through authorship, research training, and degree duration, to peer review, examination and revisions (Stadler)
- **Discussion:** Best practice, key concerns, working party → ACGR guidelines?



Models: Doctorates Including Publications

Model	Description	Duration	Example Universities
Thesis with Publications (RTP)	Publications (as sole/primary author) during candidature, under supervision.	3–4 years (min duration 2 yrs)	Dominant Australian model
PhD by Prior Publication Retrospective, not research training.	Compilation/Portfolio of works completed prior to enrolment; exegesis or introduction and conclusion of 10,000 to 50,000 words completed during candidature.	6–12 months (max duration 2 years)	Divinity, Bond, CDU, CSU, CQU, Deakin, Flinders, Newcastle, Swinburne, Torrens, Griffith (withdrawn)
Hybrid PhD: In-Candidature & Prior Publications (RTP)	Research is mainly conducted during candidature, but a proportion (usually capped at 50–66%) of prior publications may be incorporated.	2–4 years	Federation; Macquarie, Newcastle; Victoria
Staff-only PhD by Prior Publication Not RTP eligible.	Internal recognition/academic promotion pathway to meet TEQSA AQF +1 requirements (HESF 3.2.1-5: Staffing).	6–12 months	ANU, Canberra, Tasmania, Western Sydney
Higher Doctorate Career recognition, not research training.	Recognition of career publication outputs by eminent alumni and distinguished researchers affiliated with the university.	1-week candidature; 3-month exam.	JCU, RMIT, UNE, Sydney (Laws), UTS, UWA



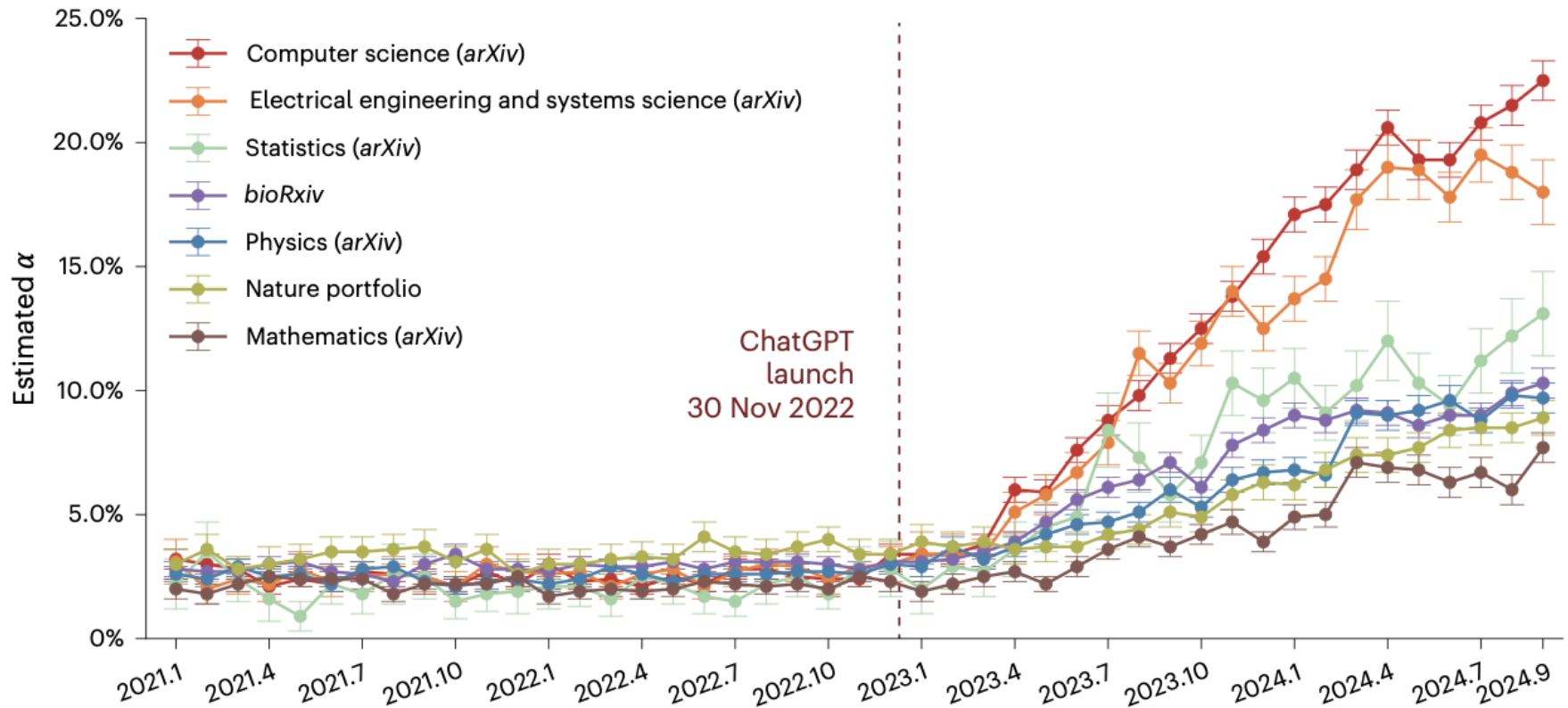
Generative AI and the future of academic writing and publishing

- ARC Discovery Project: how GenAI technologies are shaping the future of academic research from search to publication
- Focused on GenAI tools targeted at researchers (RGAI), along with practices, and policies across universities, peak bodies, and publishers
- Backdrop of crises and controversies: trust, authorship, 'AI slop,' breakdown of peer review

Artificial
Intelligence,
Authorship,
Academic
Publishing

Growth in GenAI use

(esp. in Sciences and Computer Science)



Liang, W., Zhang, Y., Wu, Z. *et al.* Quantifying large language model usage in scientific papers. *Nat Hum Behav* 9, 2599–2609 (2025). <https://doi.org/10.1038/s41562-025-02273-8>

Crises and controversies: AI 'scholarslop'

Popular Latest Newsletters

The Atlantic

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SCIENCE

Science Is Drowning in AI Slop

Peer review has met its match.

By Ross Andersen



Illustration by Jonelle Afurong / The Atlantic. Source: Getty.

JANUARY 22, 2026

SHARE  SAVE 

Tracing the social half-life of a zombie citation

Posted on [January 30, 2026](#) by [Ben Williamson](#)



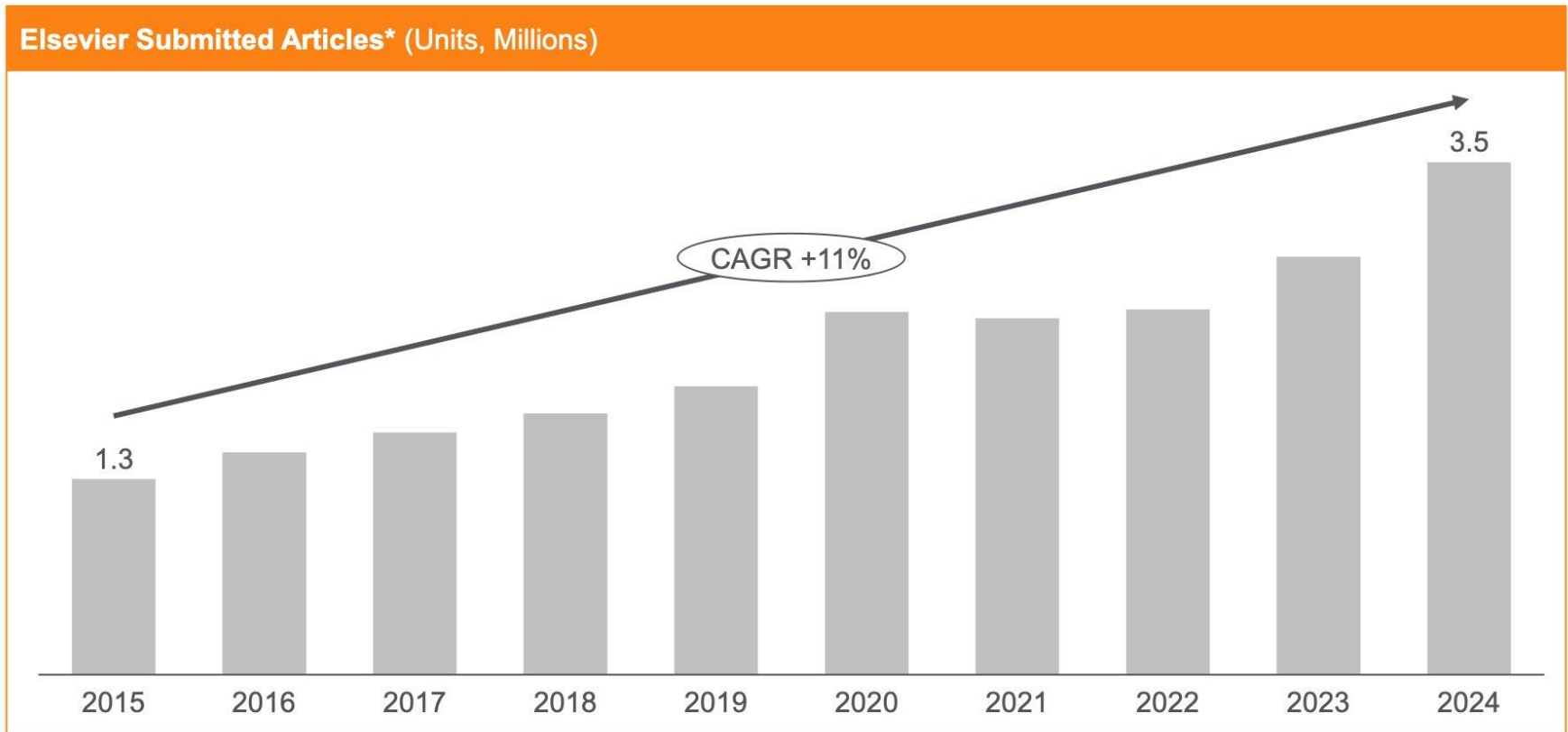
Photo by [Henrik L.](#) on [Unsplash](#)

Academic publishing is currently experiencing a viral spread of “zombie citations.” This

Crises and controversies: peer review

Article Volume Growth: Submissions

Consistent article submissions volume growth



* unique article submissions; internal article transfers excluded.

Where do research training and HDR fit?

- It's where we see
 - emerging practices and tools
 - provision of GenAI tool training (university librarians)
 - focus on developing policy, guidelines, and research capability to support “ethical” use of generative AI
 - “next generation” of researchers who will inherit (and are helping to shape) this emergent and future research paradigm
 - heightened need for due diligence by supervisors and admissions, progression, and examination teams
 - potentially heightened reputational risks to students and universities

Peer Reviewed Publications and Quality Assurance

- Peer review safeguards **research quality and integrity**.
- Supervisors and progress checkpoints (e.g., Confirmation) model ethical peer review practices integral to **research training**.
- Peer review is normally a **development tool** for PhD researchers (formative feedback during candidature, summative examination).
- **Publications prior to candidature:** Universities lack oversight of the research and writing process and the quality assurance process.
- **Artificial Intelligence, Authorship, Publishers, and Peer Review**
 - To combat the peer-review crisis, and recognising the growing use of GenAI by authors and peer reviewers, publishers are beginning to experiment with fast-tracked AI peer review (e.g., *New England Journal of Medicine*).

Sector Scan: PhD by Prior Publication



Entry standards: Most programs target mid-career researchers with a decent publication record and a research training qualification (honours or masters).



Fees vary: Application and examination fees only; tuition fees up to 1yr; not RTP eligible; RTP offset; domestic/international full-fee \$8,190 (semester) to \$54,000 p/a



Common requirements: sole or primary author papers, international quality peer reviewed work, no previous doctorate.



Some also require: Citations and/or impact evidence; Scimago/Q1/Q2 ranked journals; Work published within the last 6–15 years.



Exegesis indicates how much original research is written during candidature. Prior-Publication PhD 10k–40k words, Creative Arts exegesis 25k–50k words.

Example: CQU's PhD by Portfolio

Research Higher Degrees

We see you making a real difference and changing lives with our Research Higher Degrees.



- Non-RTP course (full fee paying), separate degree with separate course rules
- 1 EFSTL minimum / 2 EFSTL maximum (1 to 2 yrs)
- Open to any applicant who meets the criteria (Domestic/International/On or Offshore)
 - >> Bachelor Honours or Masters (with research component)
 - >> Suite of existing peer-reviewed research output/s which must be:
 - work for which the applicant is largely responsible (for example, as demonstrated by authorship sequence)
 - cogent; occurring within a unified area of study, and
 - of a volume and quality that aligns with the expectations of an Australian doctoral degree.
- Confirmation is replaced by Thesis Proposal Milestone
- Candidature may or may not include new data collection (budget available if yes)
- Candidature **must** involve a significant original contribution to knowledge *beyond* the existing outputs (occurring *during* candidature)

Quality and Risk Management

Research Higher Degrees

We see you making a real difference and changing lives with our Research Higher Degrees.



- Low enrolments - but of benefit to First Nations candidates
- Admissions process supported by supplementary documentation and review including co-authorship declarations, consents, copyright, IP and prior use info, plus a declaration of compliance for the Australian Code of Conduct and any other relevant jurisdiction.
- Outputs must be ‘fully published or in press, and has passed rigorous peer-review, under standards commensurate with HERDC specifications’
- Pre-admissions interview for all candidates
- Same expectations for completing research integrity modules, participating in skills training, research data management etc.
- Same examination process as standard doctorate
- *But* need to strengthen professional development for supervisors.



ADVAN-KT



(Advancing the Knowledge Transfer)



"Quality is our Pride": [PhD by Prior Publication](#), [Double PhD by Prior Publication](#).



Entry: Persons who have published books or articles in journals or magazines in the past 10 years.



Fees: Application Processing Fee USD 100. Additional undisclosed fee for examination and degree.



Duration: 3–12 months (fully online)



Examination: Three members of the panel will evaluate the application once it reaches us, as to finalize and recommend it to the senate of Universities. (**No universities admit to participating.**)

Key Considerations for PhDs by Prior Publication



GenAI

Authorship &
Peer Review

Course Design &
Quality

Pay for PhD



Research
Training & Exam

Duration:
"Short-cut PhD"

Devalues the
Doctorate

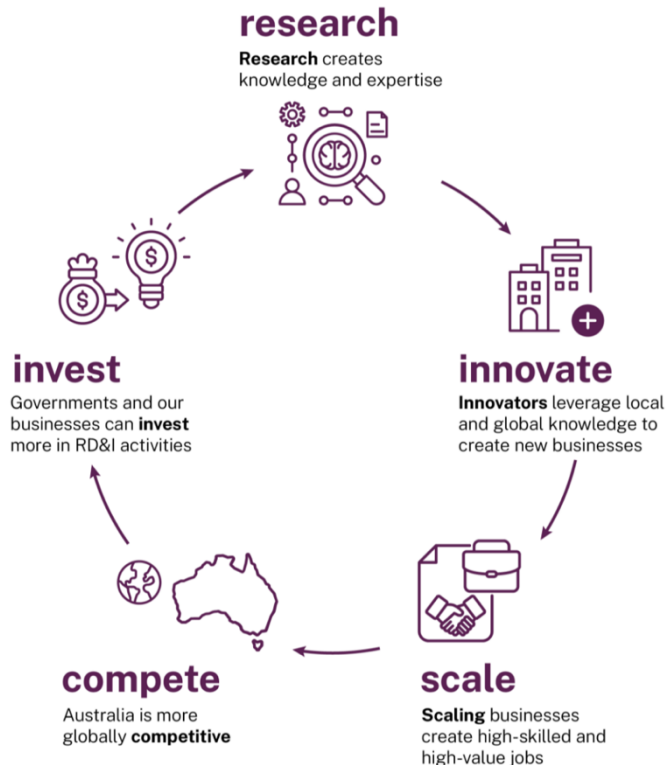


Australian Government
**Department of Industry,
Science and Resources**

Institutional Compliance

PPPs are out of step with the Australian Government's Ambition Australia: Strategic Examination of Research and Development Final Report, Recommendation 12a:

- Research training programs should have a strong industry focus.
- Universities should be encouraged to deliver entrepreneurial research training programs.



AQF 10 Course Design



Australian Government
Tertiary Education Quality
and Standards Agency

Australian
Qualifications
Framework 

The logo consists of three curved arrows forming a circle: a purple arrow at the top, a blue arrow at the bottom, and an orange arrow on the right side.

- The brief duration and short exegesis (volume of learning), and the inclusion of publications +/-10 years prior may be non-compliant with course design standards.
- **HESF 3.1.2. Course Design:** The content and learning activities of each course of study engage with:
 - a. **Current knowledge** and scholarship in relevant academic disciplines
 - c. Emerging concepts that are informed by **recent scholarship, current research findings**, and, where applicable, advances in practice.

AQF 10 Research Training



Australian Government

Tertiary Education Quality
and Standards Agency



- Higher Education Standards Framework (HESF) and TEQSA Guidance Note for Research Training.
- **HESF 4.2.1c:** “Research training is a key characteristic of the Masters Degree (Research) and **all Doctoral Degrees at AQF 10.**”
- **Research Training Program 7.2 (a)**
The objectives of the RTP are to support the research training of domestic students and overseas students undertaking HDRs at HEPs.
- **Most PPPs are ineligible for RTP \$\$\$.**

Thesis Examination and Revisions

- **HESF 1.4.5–1.4.7 Learning Outcomes and Assessment:** “Research candidates **acquire the relevant skills**, their major assessable research outputs are assessed by suitably qualified external assessors and **contribute to the development of the field.**”
- Is an **oral defence** (viva voce) required to verify authorship and contribution?
- Are examiners and universities clear about the extent of **additional work or revisions** that can be recommended/required for published work?
- Do supervisors/students believe they can **disregard recommendations for changes or updates** that differ from those of the original peer reviewers?

To Conclude

Rigorous quality assurance processes safeguard AQF 10 standards and compliance with internal & external requirements.

Benchmarking indicates the Go8 favours high quality research training and a PhD with publications during candidature.

Best practice: Use text-matching software, metrics verifying quality and impact, exclude applicants with doctorates, exclude prior work that is not peer reviewed academic research, limit publications to the past 8 years, require oral defence.

Do you want to be involved in developing ACGR Good Practice Guidelines for PhDs with Publications in the age of AI?