

# **Publishing articles from the PhD thesis**

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## **Introduction**

Recently, a couple of manuscripts from former PhD candidates were rejected by journal editors because they were not considered original. This was the result of too many text similarities with other published material indicated by plagiarism detection software used by publishers. The cause was the publicly available PhD thesis in the repository of Wageningen University & Research Library.

This problem is not only restricted to manuscripts from PhD theses, but can also occur with manuscripts that overlap with e.g. EU deliverables, conference proceedings or manuscripts in open peer review systems.

## **Doctoral Degree Regulations**

In the Doctoral Degree Regulations, it is stated that the defence of the thesis takes place in public and thus the content of the defence should be publicly available. Nothing is stated in these regulations about the electronic way of publishing the thesis. The thesis receives an ISBN and Digital Object Identifier (DOI) from the library. The thesis is submitted to the library in a digital format (plus one paper copy).

## **Open Access policy Wageningen University and Research**

At present Wageningen University & Research has no explicit Open Access policy with respect to theses. PhD candidates deliver their thesis at the library and they can request an embargo period for standard one year (this embargo period can be ended upon their request). After this year, the thesis will become publicly available unless they ask to extend the embargo period. If they do not request for an embargo period, the thesis will be publicly available at the day of defence.

The VSNU is working on an Open Access policy regarding output other than refereed articles. It is not clear yet how the policy will look like.

Policies at other universities which responded to an enquiry are shown in Annex I.

## **Options to prevent a thesis to be detected by plagiarism software**

- a) Imply embargo periods:
  - o At present a PhD candidate can request the library for an embargo period of standard one year (that can be extended). The library can provide both PhD candidates and supervisors more information about the embargo period and when it is necessary. This can be done via the website, the courses of the library and the information provided to PhD candidates who graduate.
  - o Every thesis with unpublished material may get an embargo for a year. However, this is not in line with a public defence and open access policy.
  - o The various chapters of a thesis can be published with or without an embargo period. This requires the thesis to be divided into parts. An administration is needed that is quite labour intensive. Furthermore, the thesis is not published as a coherent document.
- b) Mention upon submission that the manuscript is part of a PhD thesis and individual manuscripts may be published after a defence. The thesis itself is intended as proof of the competency of the PhD candidate to conduct independent scientific research.

We could try to initiate a dialogue with the main publishers but most probably one has to deal with this at journal level (via the editors).

An example on how to respond after a publisher indicates that a manuscript is not original is presented in Annex II.
- c) Before submission the manuscript is checked by plagiarism detecting software to explore whether or not too many text similarities with other documents appear. Further explanation on this software is given below.

## Plagiarism detecting software

In our institution, this kind of the plagiarism detection software Turnitin is available within BlackBoard. Staff that is enrolled in a course can use the software in an existing course. Staff that doesn't have access to BlackBoard, can ask for a standalone version of the software (via the Library: Fenna Onderstal).

The use of this software and interpretation of the results requires some experience. The library can support staff when using the software and incorporate this software in courses.

The supplier of Turnitin also provides a more extended software package called IThenticate. In our opinion there's no reason to switch to this extended software. However, we might investigate this further. Furthermore, there will be costs related to an IThenticate licence.

Compare to Turnitin			
		Turnitin	IThenticate
<b>Audience</b>		Students in the classroom	Faculty, researchers, corporations, governments
<b>Outcome</b>		Graded papers	Published Works
<b>Interface</b>		Course Management	Document Management
<b>Display of Results</b>	Document Viewer	✓	✓
<b>Databases</b>	60 Billion Web Pages	✓	✓
	144 Million Content Items	✓	✓
	300 Million Student Papers	✓	✗
	ProQuest Dissertations	✗	✓
	Internal Documents	✗	✓

Box: IThenticate versus Turnitin

## **Annex I**

### **Regulations at other Dutch Universities / Libraries**

#### **Maastricht University**

In Maastricht, they recently changed their procedure regarding making thesis publicly available. Before the PhD candidate could indicate whether their thesis could be publicly available. But they dealt with two cases in which an unpublished manuscript from the thesis was rejected by the journal because it was already published on the web.

In the new procedure, the supervisor indicates which parts/chapters of the thesis can't be made public. These parts will be embargoed for 1 year (standard). At the end of that year the University Library contacts the supervisor to check whether the embargoed parts have yet been published. If they have been published, these parts also become public. If not, then the embargo can be extended for another year.

#### **Academic Medical Centre (Amsterdam)**

At the AMC, they also experienced the same problems. Sometimes it helped that after a rejection the library also performed a scan and interpreted the results. They more and more set an embargo on individual chapters of a thesis.

#### **University of Amsterdam**

At the UvA they explicitly ask in the license agreement (compulsory) whether any parts of the thesis need an embargo. The maximum embargo period is 2 years and they can extend the period. The license agreement can be found here: <http://uba.uva.nl/diensten/citeren-en-publiceren/proefschrift-publiceren/proefschrift-publiceren.html> (page 3 on top).

The UvA seems to have a small amount of thesis that are fully open.

#### **Technical University Eindhoven**

The Board of Doctoral Graduations has stipulated that as from 1 September 2015 all dissertations should be freely available to the public, unless the graduate has obtained prior approval from the dean of his/her department to deviate from this rule.

Valid reasons for imposing a temporary embargo are:

- Chapters from your dissertation are still to be published separately as journal articles
- A patent is to be applied for based on research results described in the dissertation
- A dissertation is to be published as a commercial edition

#### **Free University Amsterdam**

A PhD candidate indicates per chapter:

- 1) No embargo (thesis published 28 days before graduation)
- 2) Embargo, PhD candidate chooses publication date (6 months, 1 year, 2 year, fixed date after publication article)
- 3) Embargo if chapter not yet published (6 months, 1 year, 1.5 year after graduation)

The candidate receives a reminder two weeks before a chapter is published.

#### **University Twente**

The PhD candidate indicates whether or not an embargo for a thesis is needed. If yes the embargo period is mentioned.

Before the end of the embargo period the library contacts the PhD candidate to explore whether or not the thesis can become public.

#### **University of Groningen**

PhD candidates indicate which chapter will be published (submitted or in preparation). These chapters will have an embargo period of one year. In case this needs to be extended the PhD candidate has to contact the library.

## **Annex II**

### **Example of answer to an editor after rejecting the manuscript because of plagiarism**

(by Marc Verdegem)

"The manuscript is part of a PhD thesis of Wageningen University. After the thesis defence, the full thesis is made available on-line. A Wageningen PhD thesis is a compilation of minimum four peer-reviewed manuscripts of which most will be published after defence. I think Ithenticate picked up the on-line thesis. I contributed to the writing of the manuscript and can testify that the text and work is original.

Putting PhD theses online is common practice in Europe. Proceeding with publication in a peer-reviewed journal after the thesis defence is broadly accepted and not considered plagiarism.

Considering the above, I ask you to reconsider your decision and allow resubmission of the manuscript."