

# What value do academic qualifications have within a profession-oriented discipline?

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## **Abstract**

This paper considers the role of academic qualifications within profession-oriented disciplines, and in particular the validity and processes of PhD by Publication. The paper begins by exploring the nature of profession-oriented disciplines and their fit within governmental ambitions for both higher education and the workforce. It then proceeds to consider how esteem and value are measured within the academy, isolating issues of how competency and esteem can be established in the appraisal of colleagues from profession-oriented fields. The role of the PhD by Publication is then explored, using a recent process of supervision as a case study from both the candidate and supervisor perspective. Finally, conclusions are drawn on how the process could be improved and comments offered on the wider usefulness of recommendations.

## **Methodology**

This paper rests on an examination of the associated (albeit limited) academic literature relating to PhDs by Publication, and interviews with those who have studied for, or supervised, such a degree.

It also draws on previous research, which took the form of an international survey of Publishing Studies academics working in universities worldwide (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2014a and b). This survey asked academics involved in teaching the discipline about their involvement in research and professional practice. Finally, the paper draws on first-hand experience of PhD by Publication and analysis of perspectives of those involved.

## Context

The first disciplines taught within universities were profession-orientated (Medicine, Law, Theology). Today a wider range is increasingly available – from Wine Culture to Journalism, Tourism Management to Publishing – and they are of growing popularity because potential students, and their parents, supporters and funders increasingly favour higher education courses that contribute to employability within a particular economic sector, and host universities appreciate a steady flow of applicants. At their best such disciplines offer an effective combination of professional practice at the highest level (so graduates can function in their industry sector of choice) combined with academic thinking skills. The combination leaves graduates well placed to function in their industrial sector of choice on leaving, yet also equipped to solve future problems, unanticipated as yet by the current industry. The understanding and skillset they generally apply is also highly transferable, and so promotes the employment fluidity that is characteristic of today's workplace.

In governmental terms, these outcomes are close to international goals regularly quoted within debates around higher education. Profession-oriented disciplines prepare students for an employable future; they offer the possibility of close links between the academy and industry as well as for relevant research that can be implemented quickly. Many such courses are also subject to professional validation, and so can be shown to already be meeting the particular requirements of planned or actual legislation, e.g. the Higher Education Act in the UK which seeks to formalise provision from new providers and ensure standards of delivery within existing institutions are high.

## How professional-orientated fields fit academic criteria for establishing excellence

While large student numbers, growing demand and significant relationships with industry are often evident in the delivery of profession-orientated fields, their position within the academic hierarchy is regularly insecure. Here esteem and prestige are still routinely defined by criteria relevant to more traditional disciplines: the number of PhDs seen through to completion; successful applications for academic funding; the publication of purely academic books, all of which are problematic when applied within profession-oriented fields.

Many of those teaching profession-oriented disciplines are working on part-time contracts (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2014), sometimes because there is no full time contract available but also to ensure that the professional practice on which their academic teaching is based can be continued. It follows that decisions must be made about how to allocate time. A consequence is often that professional practice and academic research cannot both be accommodated, and there is insufficient time to undertake the credit-bearing activities of academics in more traditional fields.

## Profession-orientated subjects as fields for PhD study

Profession-orientated programmes can sometimes have difficulty finding PhDs with the current and practical skills their programmes need to produce job-ready graduates and this further complicates programmatic efforts to contribute to traditional scholarship. Students selecting to study within profession-orientated disciplines are generally making their choice for reasons of future employability rather than as a starting point for academic study. The number of PhDs, as a percentage of postgraduates, is consequently very low in profession-oriented disciplines:

	Research Degree	Total Post-grad	Research as a % of total
Psychology	5,050	18,050	28%
Chemistry	4,160	5,000	83%
English Studies	2,465	5,950	41%
Nursing	1,175	21,085	6%
Journalism	135	2,035	7%
Publishing	10	525	2%

**Figure 1: UK Postgraduate Students 2013-14; research degree students compared with total post-graduates Source: HESA**

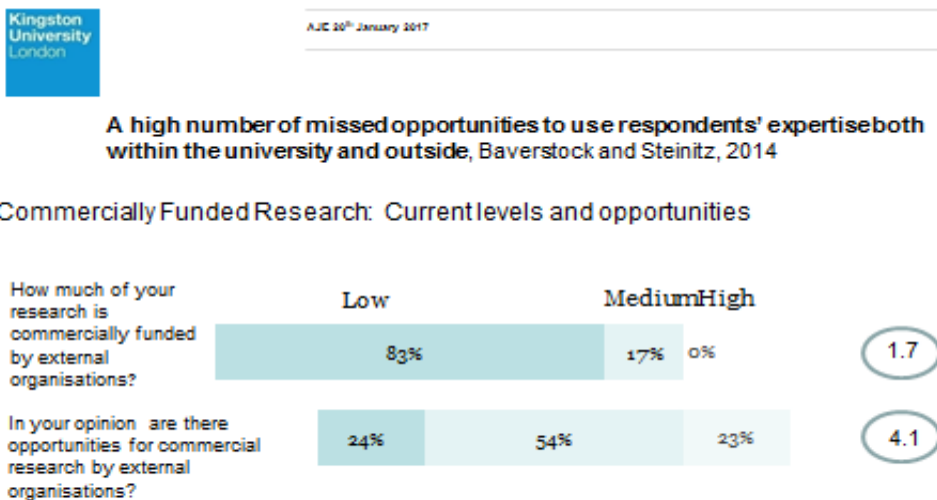
## Grant applications from within profession-orientated fields

Another hallmark of a successful scholar has traditionally involved bringing in external funding. Grant applications require the allocation of significant time and with many staff teaching profession-orientated subjects working on fractional contracts, there is often insufficient time for their pursuit.

While academic funding necessarily has a particular prestige within academia, if a decision to pursue funding is made, staff involved in profession-orientated disciplines may find it more relevant to secure money from industry sources, or the charitable sector, but research support – or just prior experience – for accessing such funds is often lacking; lists circulated by colleagues managing research support within universities routinely feature funding solely from academic sources. Baverstock and Steinitz (2014a) found an unexploited gap in opportunities for commercial research funded by external organisations, again this largely due to a lack of time to pursue them.

**Figure 2: Current engagement in commercially funded research and future potential (n1 = 60, n2 = 63) (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2014a)**

While academic funding may currently have a higher prestige within universities, the often prevailing



assumption that money from academic funds is harder to secure is questionable. Applying for even modest amounts of money from charities and organisations offering corporate sponsorship is a lengthy process;

the associated application forms are regularly long and complex. In the UK the number of applications competing for such support has also increased significantly in recent years due to economic stringencies and reduced access to some previously large funding opportunities (e.g. The Libor Fund.) The situation is similar in the US where the federal budget proposed in May 2017 by President Donald Trump ‘would effectively cripple our nation’s scientific efforts, undermining our economic growth, public health, and national security,’ according to Mary Sue Coleman, president of the Association of American Universities (AAU, 2017). Any reduction in federal research dollars in the US would almost certainly increase competition for private sector research money.

## Associated ethical issues

The issue of how universities can acknowledge esteem within profession-orientated fields also raises ethical considerations, notably how can universities isolate and affirm the value of disciplines they have officially validated, and in which they award degrees? This is important for all stakeholders: for students so that the value of their study is supported by the institution that is delivering it, for alumni so that the institution from which they graduated confirms the academic value of their qualification, and for the associated staff teaching such disciplines, to ensure they can benefit from institutional promotion and accreditation processes. If a university is awarding qualifications within a specific discipline, and has hence confirmed that discipline as academically valid, there is arguably an ethical imperative to engage with how it is taught, and how associated esteem can be recognised and acknowledged. In the UK this is particularly topical at the moment since a subtext of The Stern Report into Higher Education includes how to acknowledge and encourage participation in research across the institution, not just within academic disciplines traditionally involved.

## Literature Review

A standard definition of the PhD by Publication (also known as PhD by Published Work) is that of a PhD awarded to a candidate ‘whose thesis consists entirely or predominately of refereed and published articles in journals or books which are already in the public domain’ (UKCGE, 1996). Cambridge University began offering this new type of degree in 1966, and as of 2009, more than 60 UK universities had adopted the PhD by Publication option (Bradley, 2009). However, PhD by Publication is discussed only occasionally in the higher education press (e.g. Gibney, 2012) and the associated literature in journals is not extensive; while ‘...a body of literature has been published on the nature and standards of the conventional PhD, relatively little has been published on the PhD by Publication.’ (Durling, 2013). In addition, ‘although policies on PhDs by Publication are well established, completions by this method are still relatively minor in the UK’ (Powell, 2004), and in fact, it is not available through any US institutions at all. In other parts of the world, where this path to a PhD is an option, there are also obstacles to fully integrating the option into existing frameworks. ‘Unfortunately, Australia is not yet in a position to capitalise on the potential benefits of the publication pathway as universities, as a whole, are yet to develop guidelines which clearly outline the required outcomes’ (Jackson, 2013, p. 13).

Some researchers see the potential for PhD by Publication to offer more value than the conventional PhD (Robins and Kanowski, 2008). Because ‘low publication output is . . . a consistent feature of doctoral programmes in the UK, USA, Australia and elsewhere’ (Kamler, 2008, p. 283), increasing the number publications from research students is one strategy for increasing overall institutional output. In fact, it could also be argued that PhD by Publication is one means of delivering ‘a central tenet of doctoral research . . . that the work achieved should have an impact on other knowledge in the field’ (Powell, 2004, p. 7). African researchers Asongu and Nwachukwu seem to agree: ‘In order for PhD dissertations to be more useful to society, they should be harmonised with publications in top-tier journals in order to enhance innovation and technology transfer’ (2016, p. 18).

However, PhD by Publication does have its drawbacks and its critics. Hoddell, Street and Wildblood write of ‘a significant concern over quality assurance’ in a PhD by Published Work (2002, p. 67). Some of that concern may be attributed to the fact that the degree was originally often available only to staff or alumni of the institution making the academic award a sort of insiders-only programme. The nature of the submission itself is not standard, from the number and type of publications required to the length of the narrative

required to show the coherence of the publications, there is little consistency on what should be included in the PhD by Publication submission. Some universities, but not all, also require potential candidates to make a case for the coherence of their work at a *prima facie* stage, which Wilson believes provides valuable experience to candidates developing their ability to defend their research achievements (2002). He goes on to say that assessment of the PhD by published work should confirm that candidates are competent researchers, know their subjects and can plan, implement and evaluate their research activities (p. 76), but the challenge is in developing a standard assessment of those desired outcomes.

Yet, the need to overcome objections to a PhD by Publication is greater now than ever before.

For example, Baverstock and Steinitz (2014a) found an inverse correlation between professional practice and level of research activity, with respondents’ involvement reported within either research or professional practice (or both). 31% of the sample had a high involvement in professional practice but only low to medium research while 34% had a high involvement in research but only low to medium involvement in professional practice. The conclusion would seem to be that while academic research and professional practice are equally relevant to academics in such fields, they find it hard to be both involved both, particularly given that the majority of staff are on fractional contracts.

**Figure 3: Level of own research versus level of involvement in professional practice (Baverstock and Steinitz, 2014a)**

In the US, the disconnect between practitioner and research expertise has been of particular concern for the

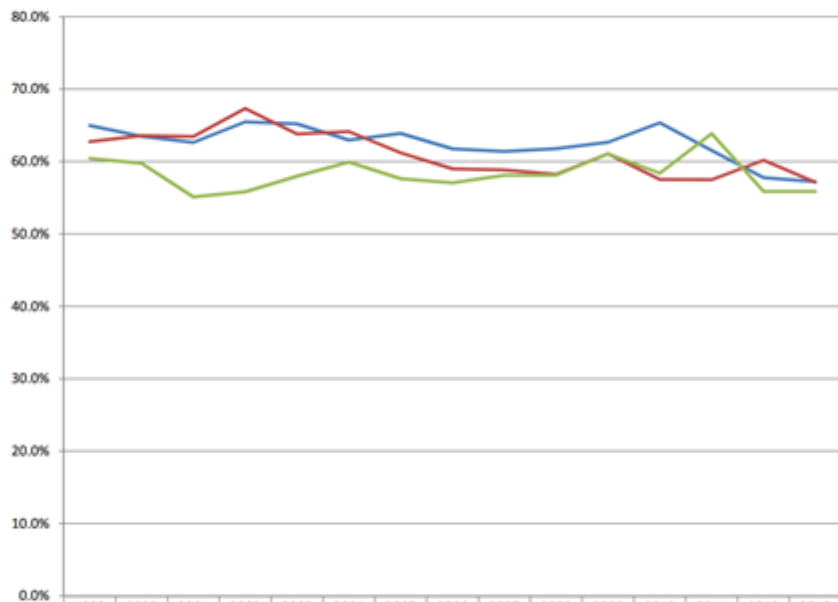
	Involvement in Professional Practice			
Involvement in Research	High	Medium	Low	Total
High	7%	19%	15%	42%
Medium	13%	9%	9%	31%
Low	18%	9%	0%	27%
Total	39%	37%	24%	100%

disciplines of journalism and mass communication. Using data from The Association of Schools of Journalism and Mass Communication (ASJMC), researchers Becker, Vlad and Stefanita analysed the percentage of faculty with PhDs working in journalism and mass communication programmes from 1999-2013 and categorized the results according to the Carnegie research status of the university<sup>1</sup> (Becker *et al*, 2014).

**Figure 4: Source: Becker, Vlad and Sefanita, 2014**

The research team found that the number of faculty with PhDs was at or near an all-time low across the board in US JMC programs, regardless of the research intensity of the university.

**Chart 21. Final Degree of Journalism and Mass Communication Faculty  
By Carnegie Type (% Ph.D.)**



	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Research I/Very High Research	65.0%	63.5%	62.6%	65.5%	65.2%	63.0%	63.9%	61.8%	61.4%	61.8%	62.7%	65.3%	61.5%	57.8%	57.2%
Research II/High Research	62.7%	63.6%	63.4%	67.3%	63.8%	64.1%	61.2%	59.0%	58.8%	58.2%	61.1%	57.5%	57.5%	60.2%	57.1%
Liberal Arts/BA MA Universities	60.4%	59.7%	55.1%	55.8%	58.0%	59.9%	57.6%	57.0%	58.1%	58.1%	61.1%	58.4%	63.9%	55.9%	55.9%

Figure 5: Source: Becker, Vlad and Sefanita, 2014

Conversely, they also found that professional experience was at an all-time high in US JMC programmes, so it stands to reason that there is a large pool of academics who have a job and extensive professional experience, but lack a terminal degree in their disciplines. Offering these individuals a route to a PhD by Publication has the potential to serve the needs of their institutions by increasing the amount of academic research produced and to the individuals themselves as this enhances their standing and perceived value within the academy.

## Possible responses from academics involved in profession-orientated disciplines

How should those involved in both delivering and managing profession-oriented disciplines within universities respond? One solution is just to lie low, carry on with recruitment and delivery and forget about the current mechanisms of higher education, which may acquire another priority before long. While profession-orientated fields may not feature high up on university esteem lists they are, as one dean reported, ‘useful for other things’ such as demonstrating interface with industry and the counting mechanisms that support institutional claims for outreach and widening participation. Such fields can offer ready-made case studies of industry liaison while continuing to benefit the institutional coffers through applicant numbers.

On the other hand, given that it is not difficult to estimate the economic significance of individual disciplines to an institution, and considering implications of the Stern Report relating to disciplinary tolerance, a more assertive spirit among those teaching profession-orientated fields may be on the rise. Staff whose discipline is validated as degree-awarding, and regularly watch growing numbers of students pass before them at graduation ceremonies, may feel that their growing popularity should be accompanied by a similar level of curiosity within the awarding institution. They may approve a hunt for processes that would enable colleagues from more traditional disciplines to assess the quality of what they offer, using metrics they can relate to, which model the essential nature of profession-orientated disciplines and which benefit the

institution by enabling an outward demonstration of how it values its own offering. This is likely to be very beneficial for marketing programmes of study and the process of attracting new students. Enter PhD by Publication, stage left.

## What is PhD by publication?

The authors have already offered the relatively simplistic UKCGE definition of PhD by Publication (or by prior publication or portfolio; various names exist). However, it is worth expanding on what such a degree means as it allows the presentation of a body of published work that has made a significant contribution to knowledge to be assessed and validated within an academic context. The route allows people who have not followed the traditional academic route towards a PhD to obtain academic recognition for having developed their research skills, undertaken and produced research, and made an original contribution to knowledge to doctoral level and is generally outlined as taking a year. Whereas it is often described within a conventional academic context it may enable people entering higher education in mid-career, especially in practice-based disciplines, to acquire academic validation for their work.

*'This award has been linked with an aspiration on the part of institutions to recognise members of existing teaching staff who, for whatever reason, have not previously gained a research degree, yet have extensive experience of practising good quality research over a period of years. One justification for this approach is that in the more practice-based subjects such as design, it is common for practitioners to hold a studio masters degree but not a PhD, yet they may have learned research 'on the job' and have an extensive record of publication. In a few cases, individuals are recognised authorities in their subjects and hold professorships. Unlike a conventional PhD where the study is planned in advance, the PhD by Publication route is more akin to an APEL process (accreditation of prior and experiential learning) where the contribution to knowledge has already been made, and simply needs to be brought into a form that may be assessed (OCA).'*' (Durling, 2013, p. 4).

PhD by Publication is particularly suited to the presentation of work within a profession-orientated discipline because what it presents has already been validated by commercial publication and subsequent academic validation confirms its usefulness within academia. For example, the first PhD by Publication candidate supervised by the first author of this paper was both a highly active professional and part-time lecturer. The academic validation of his industry-influencing work by PhD by Publication resulted in increased tutor confidence, a wealth of research-informed teaching for his students – and credit for the university.

## The availability of PhD by Publication in practice

Within higher education their availability within universities are not universal, many are validated but in practice unavailable, or they are described in terminology that does not make their wide applicability evident. The rules at Kingston University are similar to other institutions making the award available, and generally include substantial published work and an introductory section of about 10,000-15,000 words. On completion it will be the subject of an oral examination, or viva, in which candidates have to show they have critically investigated their area of research; and made an independent and original contribution to knowledge.

The wide relevance of this route for those from a practice or professional background is often not explicit. For example, the University of Westminster offers 'The PhD by published work route is intended primarily for mid-career research-active academics who, for one reason or another, haven't had the opportunity to undertake a research programme leading to a PhD.' (Westminster, 2017) Thus the route is presented as plugging a gap in a conventional academic career. In this particular case the regulations do not permit the inclusion of work produced more than ten years before submission, meaning a lifetime contribution within industrial practice cannot be taken into account.

Other universities technically offer PhD by Publication but in practice make it unavailable, or offer internal resistance which impacts on institutional opinion on the associated value or prestige. One candidate awaiting her viva commented:

'In my workplace there is a drive for all academic staff to obtain a PhD. Because I had previously published, including in well-regarded journals, and because of my age – I'm a bit long in the tooth – I wished to do a PhD by Publication. Yet when I asked about it I sensed the colleague in charge of faculty research

was not enthusiastic and I was advised by them not to do a PhD by Publication as I could fail. I wasn't clear why, but it nevertheless knocked my confidence.

In the end I worked around this individual. With the encouragement of colleagues, I found a member of staff experienced in supervising people through this publication route, and although they were in a different subject area to mine, they were very helpful. Once I finished, and two external professors had been lined up as external examiners (plus one internal), the person responsible for research tried to block one of those who had been approached and refused to sign them off. They also visited my supervisor, argued with them about their involvement and questioned their experience.

I am still waiting for my viva, do not know if I will pass and am angry about the way I have been treated in this process and undermined. Some professors appear to 'look down' on PhDs by Publication or certainly have their own agendas when this is a route that has been validated by my institution. For those of us who come into HE via professional experience, and have already published academic research, this is a sensible way of obtaining a PhD and it needs to be more widely embraced and used, rather than making those of us who choose it feel second rate.'

This candidate has subsequently had a very successful viva and obtained her PhD. However, she subsequently learned that before being called in to her viva the internal examiner was very concerned about some of her research articles being co-authored (clearly allowed according to university rules and, luckily, defended by the panel chair who had sound knowledge of the rules). Thus, the experience left her questioning the judgment of the professor who was her research director and his motives for blocking her progress, and whether there is hostility and ignorance about the process in other institutions.

Anecdotal evidence shows there is a regular lack of awareness about what is involved in the submission, and that this depends on the submission of a significant body of published work. For example, a conversation about the recent supervision of one candidate prompted the comment from a Director of Research about what role there really was for a supervisor in helping to develop the associated thesis: 'Surely you just hand it over?'

Stories circulate of candidates finding themselves at viva for PhD by Publication required not only to defend the value of their work, but the value of the degree for which they are being examined, although already part of the university's validated and confirmed offering. One candidate for a PhD by Publication commented on his viva:

*"I know quite a few people doing a traditional PhD who have had a challenging viva in all senses of that word, including a female friend reduced to tears, so it is difficult to assess the extent to which my experience reflected the form of the PhD, or some fairly traditional male academic views on needing to continue a tradition of the viva as a tough rite of passage for any form of PhD.*

*"Certainly making me wait outside for so long on a hot afternoon was not good practice in any setting and the disagreement they had obviously been having went straight onto me from the moment we started with barely time for a 'Hello'. A better chair would also have helped me as he seemed unclear on his role and resorted at times to joining the attack.*

*"Reflecting on the experience, I think it was driven by one examiner being both unfamiliar with this form of PhD and with the predominantly qualitative methodologies underpinning the majority of my articles, most of which were published in professional management journals publications rather than starred academic journals. As I knew he was a quantitative economist I guess I might have anticipated the attack on qualitative methods. Expecting a totally consistent methodology and hypothesis to test over 20 years of work and article-writing was I felt somewhat unfair. And I was totally unprepared for his apparent complete rejection of jointly authored publications, and found it somewhat ironic when in some cases I had written all the text and just partnered with academic friends in the heading to give the articles a bit more credibility! He also was clearly expecting a traditional format PhD with long literature review and had found my paper difficult to assess. I didn't feel he had read the articles, only the 12,000 word justification paper.*

*"Overall, helped by my good supervisors, I guess the thing I am most proud of was swallowing my pride and hurt and buckling down to totally rewrite my submission in a much more traditional PhD format, this process helped by the relaxation of the word limit post-viva, which meant I could double its size with a much fuller literature review. This was somewhat ironic when I really struggled to get my initial draft down to the 12,000 word limit the institution set on PhD by Publication!"*In conclusion, while getting a tough viva is fine, examiners do need to be properly briefed on the guidelines for this form of PhD – such as the 12,000 word limit and the associated publications being part of the submission.'

Resistance to the concept of a PhD by Publication may come from those within more traditional academic fields, but it is also reported from those without a PhD at all, who lack sufficient material for submission within a programme of PhD by Publications, or those who disapprove of the establishment of cross-disciplinary supervision, in order to access process-expertise within the institution. We heard of repeated instances of unreturned emails and enquiries not being pursued, for example, research colleagues and acquaintances



in Australia and The Netherlands of one candidate telling her that she would be a 'perfect' candidate for this, but subsequent email questions inquiries being virtually ignored.

## How publications are assessed within academia

The issue of publications presented for assessment within PhD by Publication that are not published by traditional academic publishers also emerges - impacting significantly on the mechanisms used by academia for the appraisal of submissions. A significant issue here is the process of publishing, which is routinely concentrated on formatting titles to ensure maximum saleability within anticipated markets rather than subsequent participation in academic identity parades. Thus books that sport 'How to' in their titles may be well positioned to attract interest within industry, but automatically downgraded within academia. Similarly, the involvement of co-authors; seen by publishers as drawing on a helpful breadth of expertise and hence positioning a title to appeal to a range of markets, may rather be reviewed by those estimating impact as diminishing the product through widening involvement. This understanding reflects the assessors' disciplinary background; thus whereas colleagues within the sciences may be comfortable with team-based research (and it is notable that the Nobel Prize recently expanded the number of participating nominees to reflect the growing size of research teams), within the Humanities it is common for the sole-authored monograph to be considered the acme of perfection, and collaboration to be looked down upon.

Convictions about the unique specialness of academic publishing persist. In one UK university, when outlining the criteria that qualify candidates for a Professorship, the chair of a Professorial Appointments Panel commented (2012): 'I personally hold by the opinion that under the criteria for research "peer reviewed publications" refers to academic peer review not industrial or publishing.'

But to adopt this position fundamentally underestimates the careful and strategic decision-making that underpins investment decisions within publishing houses. Whereas an academic monograph may require very little in the way of funding to ensure it reaches the scholars likely to buy it or suggest a copy for purchase by their institutional library, publications with an anticipated wider market regularly go through rounds discussion at internal meetings, are submitted to a variety of different reader-reports, institutional trial and international market research, this process grounded in a strategic need to estimate likely sales potential before investment is made.

How else could the merit and wider academic value of profession-orientated publications not published by an academic publishing house be estimated? Other measures might include the number of universities in which material is used (national/international) and consequent estimation of the percentage of institutions included; licenses for translation/local editions; feedback from industry commentators; author involvement on editorial and academic panels in academic/industry events and audience size; involvement in profession-specific associations, such as The Association for Journalists in Education (UK); Association for Publishing Education (UK); the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication (US). A publication's position within field development should also be considered, thus the first publication of a book intended for wider sale may have been formatted differently (e.g. cover, the inclusion of cartoons/illustrations) from subsequent editions, once its role within universities had been established. Finally, when publications are jointly written, it is rare for contributors not to be able to precisely isolate their particular contributions - and thus steer those reviewing to the relevant parts of the book.

In the US, the academic environment for profession-orientated disciplines is similar to that in the UK. There is pressure from state legislators, who control relatively small but significant sources of funding, as well as from higher education governing bodies to graduate a job-ready workforce. And there is pressure to bring in funding and maintain or achieve research active (Research 1) status for all involved in teaching. But the 'Coin of the realm' at the university level is still a PhD, although demand for practical skills has never been higher at unit level. There is currently no option for PhD by Publication in the US, a principle that sits in curious contrast with wider sector objectives to create a workplace-ready stream of graduates.

The relevance of a PhD by Publication within profession-orientated fields, however, makes particular sense given that profession-oriented disciplines are generally more accepting of applied research. The *prima facie* stage that most such programmes require serves as quality control, providing a pathway for candidates to foster and demonstrate their publishing capabilities *before* acceptance into programmes, thus reducing organizational risk in making appointments. Those with a doctorate with significant publishing experience are better positioned for a career in softening academic labour markets as search committees may be more inclined to hire a PhD with a proven track record of multiple publications over time rather than a newly

minted PhD with merely the potential for sustained scholarship. In that it documents the process of knowledge building, the process of PhD by Publication can also play a significant role in discipline building.

## How the processes of PhD by Publication could be better

From working through the process associated with this paper, a number of recommendations on associated improvement can be made. Firstly, there is an apparent need for both the development of more specific and consistent guidelines on the quantity and quality of required publications required for a PhD by Publication, and how the entire body of work should be integrated and evaluated to ensure the thesis is of comparable utility and quality to the conventional dissertation. This needs to start with recognition by faculty that the publications have been produced for use within industry and thus will not necessarily conform to a preconceived notion of what an academic book looks like. As one faculty member within a profession-orientated field commented:

*'I remember watching our Faculty Director of Research appraise my books on writing, published by a prestigious house, sold internationally and widely translated. She based her examination on the Perry five chapter model, looked to see where the second chapter offering a literature review was, and finding none put them down saying they would not do as they failed to correspond to academic norms. She then asked if she could keep them for her husband, a fellow academic, who was writing a book and would find them very useful.'*

Secondly, it would be appropriate to promote organisational curiosity within higher education about all staff whose disciplines are offered by the institution; to foster both enquiry and research that analyses the productivity and achievements of PhD by Publication recipients compared to traditional PhD graduates to determine their effectiveness, within both academia and industry. The suspicion of the authors of this paper is that personal effectiveness and impact observed would be considerable.

Objections to PhD by Publication may also lie within existing institutional staffing, within which profession-orientated disciplines are consistently a minority. For example, a survey of 214 full professors found that those with a traditional PhD believed a terminal degree was more important for a Journalism faculty than significant work experience in journalism (Pardun, McKeever, Pressgrove and McKeever, 2015). PhD by Publication is consistently reported as being viewed as an inferior path. Criticisms, in general, are that earning a PhD by Publication is somehow 'easier' than going the traditional route; dismissing the time spent researching and publishing prior to embarking on the degree programme and the effort required in pulling together a sustained body of work into a manageable supporting narrative:

*'The effort involved in pulling together a suitable narrative at this level, and providing evidence of work completed over a long period of time, is not trivial.'* (Durling, 2013, p.11).

*'All this took a great deal of time, and the expectation implicit in the regulations that submission might take place within a few months of enrolment was not met. The entire process took nearly two years in total. This was not an easy option.'* (Durling, 2013, p.10).

Finally, it would be appropriate to promote the availability of PhD by Publication to those outside the academy who are publishing important work; that it's not 'just a staff' degree.

## A changed environment for PhD by Publication?

Significantly the time may now be right for PhD by Publication within the professional associations supporting its development within higher education. The Association for Journalism Education hosted a paper on PhD by Publication at its January Conference, put it first on the programme and has since hosted an associated blog (Baverstock and Wenger, 1 and 2 February 2017).

In the US too, the time may be right for closing the gap between media educators and practitioners. Paul Voakes, 2016-17 president of the Association of Educators in Journalism and Mass Communication (AE-JMC), has a task force devoted to improving relevance of JMC research for professions. His emphasis is on globalization permeating US institutions, on the industry-experience of faculty members increasing and PhDs decreasing across the board in JMC programmes:

*'I'm excited to begin my presidential term, which I see as a committed renewal of several of the inspiring initiatives of my presidential predecessors, and an initiative or two of my own.'*

*The theme of my term is "Closing the Gap," which implies a number of different contexts for "gaps," but the "gap" that chiefly concerns me is the gap between JMC educators and media practitioners. I don't think there has ever been a time in which a symbiosis between media professionals and media educators was more*

*urgently needed. But I don't see it happening to the extent that it should.' Paul Voakes, AEJMC President 2016-17*

## Case study. PhD by Publication, Dr Debora Wenger

The first step towards a PhD by Publication was to speak to Dr David Rogers, who met Debora when he was visiting The University of Mississippi from Kingston University, where he was then Head of the School of Humanities and involved in recruiting graduate students. A native of Tennessee, Dr Rogers is used to transatlantic cross-fertilisation and pioneered the establishment of an MFA<sup>2</sup> degree at Kingston, the first in the UK. Debora had been exploring options for a PhD by Publication in the UK and sought advice from Dr. Rogers, who saw potential in her as a candidate.

The tutee comments:

*'Dr Rogers conducted a prima facie review of my work and put me in touch with Dr Alison Baverstock, co-founder of the MA Publishing programme at Kingston and herself a PhD by Publication (from Oxford Brookes).*

*Having examined the work, Alison was confident that it was likely to be well situated within her department of Journalism and Publishing. She was also convinced that a connected argument could be made as to the value this published work, which was based on exploration of the skills recruiters are looking for within the potential workforce for journalism, and corresponding consideration of how universities are preparing their students for future employment.*

*It did, however, take 18 months to have my candidature approved by Kingston. The process required patient negotiation with the Graduate School, which had validated PhD by Publication for the university as a whole, and with senior management of the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences, which consisted of colleagues from traditional academic fields, unused to PhD by Publication, and so far with no faculty candidates who had used this route.'*

Once the decision had been made to permit her registration, progress was swift. Debora was given strong support from her home school, and time away from teaching to work on her thesis. She gained her PhD without corrections – and with strong affirmation of the work from both examiners. Acquisition of a PhD enabled a swift Assistant Dean position at her home university, and contributed to her subsequent success in gaining a Knight Foundation Grant for the University of Mississippi.

From the supervisor's point of view, this was a significant step; ensuring the affirmation of the value and significance of a candidate's work, in the process confirming the value that colleagues working within other profession-orientated fields are able offer within HE and in preparing students for life as useful and contributing members of society. Her tutor comments:

*'A variety of responses to PhD by publication are routinely witnessed. There are practitioners who will helpfully pass on the view they had "heard elsewhere" that a PhD by Publication has less value than the traditional sort. Those with a traditional academic PhD regularly pose a rhetorical question about how long it takes to achieve the qualification – "A year isn't it?" – overlooking the time it takes to have written and published the significant body of material on which a submission must be based.*

The merit of our candidate was confirmed the very same week she graduated, when she was acknowledged as one of the best educators in journalism in the US (Newspro, 2017). Generous feedback came from the Association for Journalists in Education, where she and I made a presentation on the opportunities and challenges of PhD by Publication to the January 2017 conference; we found strong interest in the associated processes, a sharing of candidates' experiences of impediments to progress from within their own institutions, and there were several subsequent enquiries to Kingston. Ultimately the lack of special noting when Debora received her degree is perhaps the most significant thing; she was simply on the list of those to receive their award at Graduation in January 2017 and walked across the stage along with every other PhD candidate who had qualified over the same period, to collective applause. Well done Dr Wenger.'

## Conclusion

As universities expand the range of courses available to students, and validate associated degrees, it is important that methods of acknowledging the experience and expertise of those delivering correspond to the full range of courses available. The availability of PhD by Publication is an important within academia as it enables the validation of published work of esteem that is relevant to both the courses that are being taught within higher education and their wider industrial or sector context, and can affirm the value and role those

delivering them. In the case of profession-orientated fields, PhD by Publication enables the validation of work that has a relevance to both industry and academy; particularly important given the nature of such disciplines, which rely on understanding of both professional practice and academic thinking. Formal methods of affirming an individual's contribution those that are highly relevant to academic delivery to be counted within academic metrics and thus reveal their particularly relevant characteristics within the framework within which they operate, rather than be regarded as supplementary evidence through presentation as case studies or examples of industry-HE interaction.

The incorporation of such degrees within the structures of higher education offers a development opportunity not only to the academic candidate, but also to those supervising, chairing vivas, managing research support and associated administrative arrangements. They offer a powerful demonstration to the wider institution of the institution's support for the full range of disciplines being taught and the mutual respect with which different disciplines are regarded by the university.

Finally, they offer the benefit of promoting learning and accreditation at a more ingrained level within the organisation, modelling life-long learning to students and colleagues, and the benefits of research-informed teaching to the students.

First-hand experience of PhD by Publication, and wider explorations prompted by the process, form the basis of this paper. This has led to wider investigation of the availability of PhD by Publication within UK universities, along with exploration of how it is described and how often utilised. These findings will be reported in a subsequent paper.

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(Endnotes)-----

- 1 The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education is a framework for classifying the level of research activity within colleges and universities in the United States.
- 2 Master of Fine Arts, the final award in Creative practice in the US.