**Social Sciences Division**

# Notes of Guidance – Higher Doctorates

**General Information**

Higher Doctorates available: **Doctor of Letters (DLitt), Doctor of Science (DSc)**

Responsible body with oversight of the higher doctorates: Social Sciences Divisional Board

Contact for informal enquiries: [higherdoctorates@socsci.ox.ac.uk](mailto:higherdoctorates@socsci.ox.ac.uk)

The Social Sciences Divisional Board has developed this supplementary guidance to be considered, in conjunction with the University regulations, by potential applicants and judges for Higher Doctorates.

**Criteria**

“Judges will be asked to consider whether the evidence submitted demonstrates excellence in academic scholarship and is:

1. of the absolute highest quality;
2. substantial in scale and in the contribution it has made to knowledge;
3. sustained over time and showing current and continued contribution to scholarship;
4. authoritative, being able to demonstrate impact on the work of others;
5. of global reach and international importance within the field; and
6. of such breadth or covering such branches of knowledge appropriate to the field and in line with disciplinary norms and expectations.”

(<http://www.admin.ox.ac.uk/examregs/2017-18/grforhighdoct>)

The criteria are intended to give scope for some flexibility by the judges in their interpretation. Assessments of a candidate should be set in an international context i.e. would the leading international figures in this branch of social sciences regard this person as having an authoritative status in the field? The phrase ‘branches of knowledge’ should be interpreted as a field with some breadth, such as might form the subject of a major conference or an established journal (e.g. international security, migration studies, experimental economics, African/Latin/Asian studies, comparative politics, transport studies) rather than a narrow specialised topic. However, candidates and judges should note that the wording of the official regulation takes precedence in the consideration of all submissions.

**Initial application requirements**

Applications should comprise:

* An application Form
* A covering statement
* An academic CV
* A list of key publications

Covering statements should be no more than 10 A4 pages (minimum 11pt, single spaced), should set out how the candidate meets the criteria for the award and should position work in relation to subject-specific expectations or context.

CVs should include objective evidence of the significance and recognition of the research, such as plenary-level speaker invitations, major grants and funding, prizes. Judges will be looking for evidence of internationally leading scientific research and academic distinction. In applied fields, evidence of real-world impact would strengthen the case for the award but would be secondary to the social scientific quality.

For the key/representative publications, candidates should list no more than 12 publications (taking into account the publication practices/norms in the relevant discipline) that best represent the academic excellence and international scholarship of work. In <500 words an explanation should be included of why these particular papers have been chosen. There is no expected minimum number of publications. However, a small number of discipline-defining papers would make a stronger case for the award than a larger number of papers that give incremental gain to the field.

The applicant should have played a leading role in the research and should indicate how, for example by briefly setting out their contribution to framing the question, carrying out the analysis, directing the research and writing the paper.

Applicants are encouraged to compare their own track record and publication list with that expected of senior figures in the field (but without explicitly making ad hominem comparisons).

There is no requirement that publications should be in a single format. While it is expected that most publications will have been rigorously peer-reviewed (as is the case for journal articles and, in some fields, conference papers), other forms of publication such as books or software would be acceptable, so long as a case can be made that they have been highly influential on the field.

Please note that one year must have elapsed between the publication of a paper or book and its submission as evidence in support of an application. If papers or books are submitted which were published in the calendar year preceding that in which an application is made, the exact date of publication must be specified. Any work previously submitted for an award for this or any other institution shall be ineligible for consideration in support of the application.

**Screening process**

In Social Sciences the screening process will be conducted by the Divisional Appointments Panel, which will select a panel to review applications. Panel members will consider all application material (the application form, covering statement, CV and publications list) to determine if there is a *prima facie* case for the candidate to be invited to proceed to full scrutiny. The panel will not review any papers at this stage.

If it is established that there is a *prima facie* case for the candidate to be considered for the degree, the Head of Department in whose remit the research submission lies will be asked to recommend judges to act on behalf of the responsible body.

Contact for queries: Submissions and Research Degrees Team ([higherdoctorates@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:higherdoctorates@admin.ox.ac.uk)).

Queries should not be sent to panel/committee members.

**Full Application Requirements for Subject Area**

If/when judges are appointed, the candidate will be informed and shall then provide copies of the publications listed in their initial application (either electronically or two in hard copy), and a full list of all their publications to the Research Degrees Team. The previously submitted application form, covering statement, CV, and the key/representative publications list (with their explanation statements), provided at the pre-screening stage will also be used at this point.

Contact for queries: Research Degrees Team ([higherdoctorates@admin.ox.ac.uk](mailto:higherdoctorates@admin.ox.ac.uk)).

Queries should not be sent to panel/committee members.