

eTheses: Mandates, Embargoes, Compliance, Impact and Sanctions

The results of a brief survey

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Executive Summary

- 25 individual UK HEIs responded to the survey about their eTheses and embargo process and policy
- 92% of respondents either have an eThesis mandate or are planning to introduce one.
- 44% of respondents withhold degree award or certificate for non-compliance of eThesis submission
- 76% of respondents restrict access to print and eTheses embargoed
- 40% of respondents apply embargo periods differently to print and eTheses
- 36% of respondents apply embargo periods equally to print and eTheses
- 96% of respondents allow for some restriction period to be placed on eTheses availability
- 48% of respondents allowed eThesis access to be restricted for 2-3 years maximum
- 48% of respondents allow eThesis access to be restricted for periods in excess of 5 years
- Many respondents allow for extensions to restrictions to be judged on a case by case basis

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Overview and method

Following a discussion with the Director of Library Services and the Graduate Dean a brief questionnaire was mounted on Survey Monkey and distributed to UKCoRR¹ members. In total 25 institutions responded. To ensure disambiguation of answers respondents were asked to include details of their organisation (*Appendix A*). Specific answers are anonymised as a condition of the openness of the responses.

eThesis Deposit Mandate

Response	Percentage
Yes, already in place	88%
Approved, not yet in place	4%
No, but planned	0%
No and not currently planned	4%
Other	4%
Did not answer	4%

From these results it seems that 92% of UK HEIs responding either have an eThesis mandate or are planning to introduce one.

The one *Other* answer was “*The 'policy' is being reviewed and may become a mandate in the future.*” One of those institutions with a mandate also commented “*It's not called a mandate, but higher degree students are asked to submit an eThesis for the repository.*”

For more on mandates and policies in the UK see Brown & Sadler (2010a/b). For more on the reaction and perception of publishers to eThesis availability see McCutcheon (2010) and McMillan (2001).

Ensuring Compliance with Mandate

Response	Percentage
Degree award/certificate withheld	44%
Deposit enforced at submission	16%
Retrospective review (no sanction)	4%
No sanction/unclear	24%
No response	12%

The most common (44%) approach to ensuring compliance within the sample is the withholding of the degree award or certificate for non-compliance with eThesis deposit. While the authority behind this compliance varied, comments suggested that responsibility lay normally with the Graduate School or similar office. A number of other institutions (16%) reported they enforced submission, but didn't clarify the sanctions they employed against non-compliance.

For the full list of comments see *Appendix B*.

¹ www.ukcorr.org

Impact of Embargo period

Response	Percentage
Restricts print access only	0%
Restricts eThesis access only	20%
Restricts both print and eThesis access	76%
No embargo period	0%
No response	4%

Three quarters (76%) of responding institutions have embargoes that impact on both print and electronic materials alike. Two additional comments on this option were noted

- *“Print can only be embargoed if Board of Studies agree; E-version can have 1 year embargoes at authors request (and these can be extended if requested)”*
- *“The procedure required to embargo the print copy is much more stringent than for the etheses”*

A small minority of institutions only restrict access to eTheses only. A comment on this option was:

- *“Embargoes are determined by the Postgraduate Research Office so that I will not receive an embargoed item until the period has elapsed. Since the e-thesis deposit procedure has been in place, we no longer accept any bound print research theses in the library.”*

Equality of Embargo Impact

Response	Percentage
Applies to print and electronic equally	36%
Applies to print and electronic differently	40%
Applies to print only	0%
Applies to electronic only	16%
No response	8%

The impact of the an embargo as it applied to the print and/or electronic version of a thesis was almost evenly split between those who apply it to print and electronic access differently (40%) and those that apply the restriction evenly to print. A smaller number (16%) only restrict access to the electronic thesis.

Comments from those applying embargo periods equally to print and electronic included:

- *“If e theses contain uncleared 3rd party copyright material they are not made available online - we treat this differently from embargoes.”*
- *“However there is currently contradictory information about this on form and website and we are not the owners of the information”*
- *“Apply equally to both unless a different option is selected by student and approved by Dean.”*

Maximum Period of Restriction

Response	Percentage
No embargo period	0%
1 year or less	0%
2 years or less	24%
3 years or less	24%
4 years or less	0%
5 years or less	20%
5-30 years	8%
30+ -> forever	20%
Unset/decided yet	4%

There is a considerable variance in the range of years that eTheses can be restricted with the modal value falling at 2-3 years maximum restriction (48%). However longer periods are reported in 48% of respondents, with periods in excess of 30 years reported in 20%. However, virtually all (96%) respondents allow for some period of restriction to be placed on eThesis availability currently.

In terms of length of periods of restriction a number of comments were made (see *Appendix C*), the values of which are included in the table above. For more on restriction periods at other institutions see Owen et al (2009).

Further Survey Comments

A range of further comments were received (see *Appendix D*). Notably a number of institutions have policies or processes in place to extend restriction of access, usually judged on a case by case basis and with demonstrated need by the graduand. A number of respondents also noted that their processing of physical and electronic theses were in the process of being modified or revised.

Conclusions

There is a considerable variance in how permitted theses access restriction is applied in the sampled institutions. While most institutions mandate deposit of eTheses into their repository, the sanctions for non-compliance are not uniform. Periods of embargo restriction are largely applied to both the print and electronic versions of theses, although for most the impact of these restrictions varies between the two formats at the same institution. In addition the maximum embargo period is quite varied from a few years to decades, reflecting the relative caution at many institutions to expose their former-students to any future publishing hurdles (despite evidence to the contrary) rather than take advantage of the open access benefits from deposit to a repository.

Further Reading

Brown, J. & Sadler, K. (2010a) Influencing the Deposit of Electronic Theses in UK HE: Report on a sector-wide survey into thesis deposit and open access, online at: <http://www.rsp.ac.uk/documents/etheses-briefing-papers/EthesesSurveyReport.pdf>

Brown, J. & Sadler, K. (2010b) Influencing the Deposit of Electronic Theses in UK HE: Appendix – Full text responses to survey, online at: <http://www.rsp.ac.uk/documents/etheses-briefing-papers/EthesesSurveyReportAppendix.pdf>

McCutcheon, A. M. (2010). Impact of Publishers' Policy on Electronic Thesis and Dissertation (ETD) Distribution Options within the United States (PhD thesis), Ohio University, <http://etd.ohiolink.edu/send-pdf.cgi/McCutcheon%20Angela%20M.pdf?ohiou1273584209>

McMillan, G. (2001). Do ETDs Deter Publishers?, College and Research Libraries News, 62(6), 620-621, online at: <http://scholar.lib.vt.edu/staff/gailmac/publications/pubrsETD2001.html>

Owen, T.M. et al. (2009). ETDs in lock down: Trends, analyses and faculty perspectives on ETD embargoes, online at: <http://drum.lib.umd.edu/handle/1903/9087>

Appendix A: Organisations Responding

Anglia Ruskin University
Bournemouth University
Goldsmiths University
Loughborough University
Oxford Brookes University
Queen Mary, University of London
Royal Holloway, University of London
Teesside University
University of Bath
University of Central Lancashire
University of Chester
University of East London
University of Edinburgh
University of Glasgow
University of Glasgow
University of Greenwich
University of Hertfordshire
University of Leicester
University of Oxford
University of Southampton
University of St Andrews
University of Sussex
University of Warwick
Not Specified (2)

Appendix B: Methods of Compliance

- A print and electronic copy of each research thesis is submitted. When theses are awarded the Postgraduate Research Office send me the CD version. I add it to our repository GALA and return the CD.
- All eTheses are passed to us by the Research Degrees Office. Degree award is withheld until eCopy of corrected thesis has been submitted
- All theses routed via our Registry so they enforce receipt of print and electronic copy which are then passed to the library for processing
- Annual audit, identify non-compliance and work to resolve cause
- Badly! We publicise the requirement, but don't check whether students have complied.
- Checked by Graduate School at point of submission (etheses submitted on CD-Rom currently)
- don't know - not my area
- e version has to be provided when thesis submitted to Research Degrees Office - they load in repository
- If the Research Student Office do not receive notification that the eThesis has been deposited, the PhD is not awarded.
- Our Examinations Schools people have just started policing it to ensure deposit before attending the graduation ceremony.
- signed agreement, each eThesis is checked by the repository manager
- Students have to submit electronically to graduate - unless they have a written exception. Controlled by library and exams office using Pure.
- Students are not permitted to graduate until they have provided us with one electronic and one hard copy of their thesis. We provide confirmation of this to the Graduate Schools.
- Students sign a declaration form at the point of giving a bound copy and electronic version to the Graduate Office
- The Library doesn't, but students can't graduate unless they submit one hard copy and one version on CD to the College Postgraduate Office
- Theses must be submitted to Subject Librarian, with print, e-copy and Submission of Thesis Form. Students cannot graduate without completing this process. It works very well!
- They don't get the award unless they hand in x print copies and a eCopy which we responsibly archive on the Open access repository
- they submit the pdf as the submission. no pdf no submission
- through Graduate School
- Too soon to say
- We email the students, but there is no punishment for non-compliance

- We work with contacts in each of the 4 Colleges to ensure we have a completed access declaration form, electronic version and a print version. The student does not get the letter of award from the relevant College until the Theses Service confirms receipt of both versions and the form.

Appendix C: Restriction Period

- 30 years for matters of national security
- Don't know - up to Board of Studies to decide on case by case basis, embargoes typically for 3 years, but more might be allowed
- For electronic theses students can specify an embargo period of their choosing regardless of the length. Embargoes on the print are not usually longer than two years.
- Forever though 2 years is also mentioned.
- In exceptional circumstances we allow longer or permanent embargo
- in theory it is three years but the powers that be are quite liberal
- Indefinite in some rare cases.
- One year repeatable indefinitely depending on circumstances (in effect a perma-ban)
- some have to be embargoed indefinitely because of v sensitive content or copyright content
- This is for confidentiality agreements etc we use the exceptions to FOI release as a guide
- Up to two years without permission. Up to five years if there is a commercial consideration (they submit the funding agreement to prove this). Any further length by approval by Dean/Research Committee.
- usually 5 years is a maximum but can go higher if author specifically requests and has a good reason
- We do have a few with longer embargos at the request of the supervisor, and agreed with the relevant College Graduate School.
- We recommend 2 years but author can choose
- Yet to be decided

Appendix D: Further Comments

- Can request extension for embargo after 3 years if a valid reason - often a publication pending still in humanities.
- E-only from autumn 2012
- If 3rd party copyright issues apply, the student is encouraged to post an edited version with this material removed. The full version is archived, and the edited version is uploaded.
- If a student made a specific request, it would be possible to only embargo the eThesis but this makes managing the Thesis collections slightly more complicated. We allow extensions to embargo periods after the initial 2 years on a case-by-case basis and also will allow permanent embargo of a thesis, though this is rare.

- Our embargo process is currently under review and may extend potential length of embargo up to 10 years ie with one renewal allowed of max. 5 years.
- Re: 5, the initial embargo period is limited to 2 years, but they can request an extension of up to 5 years once that 2 years is complete - it is up to them to seek permission for extension. They need a signature from the Dean of their School for any embargo. Our default position is to make theses available!
- Some researchers in the Humanities say 2 years is too short
- Students can ask for a further embargo period, but they need to justify why and we confirm the need with their School/College.
- students submit a physical thesis on submission (along with the pdf), but this goes straight to the school, never to be seen again. so in affect, we have a e-only submission
- The embargo period is managed by the Graduate Research School and they have preferred to do this manually ie. do not submit to the repository/print to library until the embargo period has ended. This is one of the reasons we have asked for the policy to be reviewed as causes much confusion about where theses are in the process. We also have had examples where embargo periods have been extended after items have been submitted to the repository at the request of individual supervisors.
- When they send the electronic copy to the Graduate research School Office they sign a form in which includes author decided metadata (like abstract, keywords, related publications) and their own details as well as a licence and agreement for us to store and publish, agreement to the terms on which people can use the material and the opportunity to specify any reasons why it cant be made open access. The last includes confidentiality, patent info, imminent publication and doubles as a statement if an FOI request came in. This form is uploaded with the thesis and embargoed. The only problem is that some people request access to the form thinking it is the thesis (which is OA next to it!) or that it is more interesting work... We may upload two versions and only make an edited version with 3rd party of confidential stuff removed, OA as a compromise. Interested parties can then request the full version if they need it and we pass these requests to the author.

