What is an e-thesis?

E-thesis is the term used to describe an electronic or digitised copy of a print thesis. Such electronic copies are often deposited within an Open Access Institutional Repository to increase visibility and discoverability. There are also national and global collections of e-theses such as the British Library’s EThOS.

What is the Repository?

The Leeds Beckett Repository includes full text versions of research outputs by members of staff and research students at the University. The aim of the Repository is to provide Open Access to research, as required by funders and permitted by publishers and copyright law. When your work is available to download from our Repository, it can be found through search engines and accessed by anyone, increasing the views and potential impact of research.

What are the advantages of publishing an e-thesis?

Publication of theses has benefits for both the University and the researcher/author.

- it provides an opportunity to keep a permanent archive of your work and to raise your research profile
- your research is more visible - print theses have limited accessibility but an online thesis (ethesis) can be found by search engines, making it even easier for people to find your work
- once in the Repository, your thesis can be harvested by EThOS, the British Library’s large database of research available for free download. EThOS allows researchers to view the entire range of research activity undertaken by UK HE, so benefitting the whole research community
- increased visibility could lead to further research or funding opportunities. Sharing your research output will enable you to make connections with other researchers in your field and to build upon your research
- depositing in the Repository doesn’t replace traditional publishing and it doesn’t bypass the peer review process
- depositing your thesis supports the UK Government’s Open Access principle that publications resulting from publicly-funded research should be made freely available for all researchers

What is copyright?

Copyright provides legal protection to an original work, to prevent copying and re-use of that work without permission. Except in certain circumstances, the copyright owner or rights holder has the exclusive right to copy, lend, perform, or communicate that work to the public.
What is third party copyright?

Copyright held by someone other than yourself is known as third party copyright.

Students and staff writing their theses are encouraged to quote from a wide range of sources, to reproduce tables, diagrams or case studies, or to back up their research with their published works. The copyright in this material may be owned by another person (a third party).

What is allowed?

UK copyright legislation permits the re-use of third party copyright material within a thesis under exemptions such as:

- “illustration for instruction” which includes examination to illustrate a point, not for commercial purposes

- “quotation”, or “criticism or review” small extracts of works or quotations to critique or review those works, or otherwise. The works being copied must have been published or communicated to the public, such as via distribution, rental, exhibition, or by means of an electronic retrieval system. Unpublished works cannot be copied under this exemption.

The amount used must be fair, reasonable and necessary for the purpose, and accompanied by sufficient acknowledgement where it is practical to do so.

What is “fair”?

Factors which are relevant in determining whether a particular use is “fair” include:
- Does the use of the work substitute for buying a copy of the original?
- Is the amount of the work taken necessary, reasonable and appropriate?

What about digitisation of theses?

The digitisation of a thesis and making it available online involves publication of the work and may infringe third party copyright if it is no longer being used for examination, and use is no longer regarded as “fair”.

The inclusion of some third-party material continues to be allowed if the amount is “insubstantial”; or is being included for the purposes of “quotation” or “criticism or review”.

“Insubstantial” is not defined by law, but the amount being copied should be fair to the rights holders. You should ask yourself whether you would consider your rights to be infringed if someone else used a similar quotation/extract from your own work.
Why and when do I seek permission to include third party copyright in my thesis?

It is good academic practice to seek permission when using substantial third party copyright material. As subsequent publication requires such permission, it is better to seek it at the earliest stages, as the thesis is being written.

If you are including your own work that has already been published, e.g. journal articles submitted as part of a PhD by Existing Published Work, the publishers of those works should be contacted to check that they can be digitised as part of the thesis.

How do I seek permission?

In the case of third party copyright material from books and journals the first step is to contact the publisher.

Publishers usually have a Permissions Department, and information on who to contact should be available on their website. If the rights have been sold on, it will be necessary to forward the request to another publisher/rights holder.

A rights holder may be the author or creator of a work, or a publisher, or any person or organization which has acquired the rights. There may also be more than one rights holder, and all must be contacted for permission.

It may take rights holders some time to respond to a request for permission. Allow at least 6-8 weeks but be prepared for longer. It may be necessary to chase a request or try an alternative contact.

What should I include in a permission request letter?

It is important that all the relevant details are included in the request letter. Here is a suggested template:

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am a postgraduate research student at Leeds Beckett University working towards my thesis on [insert thesis title and award level]. I would be grateful if you could grant me permission to include the following material within my PhD thesis:

[Provide full citation of the material you wish to include]

Following the award of my degree, the electronic thesis is to be deposited in the Leeds Beckett Repository: http://repository.leedsbeckett.ac.uk/main/index.php

The Leeds Beckett Repository is free, non-commercial and openly available to all. The thesis may also subsequently be made available for access via the British Library’s EThOS service or from another Open Access source.

I hope that you will be able to grant me permission to reproduce this material within my thesis, for which full acknowledgement will be given.
If you are not the rights holder for this material, I would be grateful if you would advise me who to contact.

I look forward to your reply.

Yours sincerely,

What if I don’t receive permission?

While you are being asked to make best efforts to seek permission to include third party copyright material in the electronic version of your thesis, you will not be penalised if it this not possible, either because permissions are not granted, or because it would either be too onerous or too expensive to obtain permissions.

The outcome of your examination will not be affected; however you may not be able to make the final version of your thesis available online.

Instead, it is possible to publish a redacted version of your thesis, with any substantial third party copyright material removed.

What else do I need to consider?

Publishing a thesis has several implications:
- It may affect your opportunities to have the work published as a book or in a journal etc. Some publishers may object to publishing a work which has already been "published" online in a repository.
- A thesis could contain sensitive or personal information, such as named individuals, photographs of identifiable people, signatures or case studies of actual businesses or institutions, or details of patents pending.

Examples of sensitive or personal information include:
- Patient or pupil details in clinic-based or education topics
- Confidential data revealed by sponsors or through interviews/questionnaires
- Real names or personal addresses in case studies or questionnaires
- Some political analyses
- Evidence of animal testing having been carried out
- Photographs of people who have not granted permission to be included in an online publication

Data Protection

The Data Protection Act 2018 sets standards for protecting general data, in accordance with the EU General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and gives individuals more control over use of their data, and provides new rights to move or delete personal data.

Personal data is information that relates to an identified or identifiable individual, including a name or identification number; location data; and an online identifier. Sensitive personal data might include race, religion, politics, health or genetics.

Pseudonymised data can help reduce privacy risks by making it more difficult to identify individuals, but it is still personal data.
If you are including personal data in a thesis, you must obtain consent and be aware that consent can be withdrawn at any time. The Repository’s Takedown Policy outlines how material can be removed.

If you are affected by these issues, there are options to embargo a thesis for a set period of time to first enable commercial publication, and to redact or remove sensitive material etc.

**Web accessibility**

Regulations which came into force in September 2018 require University webpages and online documents to meet certain accessibility standards. If your electronic thesis is in PDF format you can use Adobe Reader or Adobe Acrobat Pro to check its accessibility. Any images, diagrams or photographs (non-text content) will require the addition of text alternatives. Decorative images do not require text description, however these will be removed from the thesis prior to online publication unless you are the copyright holder.

Guidance is available here:

https://www.gov.uk/guidance/how-to-publish-on-gov-uk/accessible-pdfs

**Where can I find help and advice?**

PhD supervisors can advise whether permission or an embargo is required for a thesis. If in doubt about whether permission is needed to include any material within a thesis it is always best to err on the side of caution and assume that it is.

Copyright sessions are available as part of the Research Training Programme.

Guidance on copyright is available via the Library website.

The Copyright Clearance Service -

Telephone: 0113 812 7472

Email: r.thornton@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

Support for Researchers –

Telephone: 0113 812 4731

Email: openaccess@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

The University has an [Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) Policy](#).