

Keeping Your Thesis Legal

Copyright essentials for postgraduate researchers



Why this matters

Your thesis will be **made available online**.

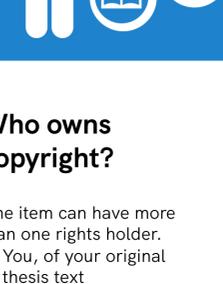
That means:

- Copyright applies beyond examination
- Errors can delay it being made available
- Material may need to be removed before it can be available to everyone

What is copyrighted?

Copyright applies automatically to most content:

- Text extracts
- Images and photographs
- Figures, tables and charts
- Maps and diagrams
- Previously published work (*even your own*)



Ideas and facts are not copyrighted...

But their *expression* is.

Who owns copyright?

One item can have more than one rights holder.

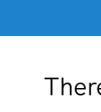
- You, of your original thesis text
- Others, of images, figures and data included
- Even publishers, if you've published material before and signed a Copyright Transfer Agreement

So always:

- ✓ Cite and reference all sources
- ✓ Acknowledge creators clearly
- ✓ Keep written records of permissions needed, asked for and received
- ✓ Ask for advice if you're unsure



When do you need permission?



You may need permission for:

- Maps or charts
- Long text extracts
- Images or photographs
- Tables or figures
- Your own work if it's been published before

There is **no safe word limit**.

The test is whether use is **substantial** - whether what you've used is a key part of the work.



When might permission not be needed?

UK copyright allows limited reuse under **fair dealing**, including:

- criticism or review
- quotation

But only if:

- the amount used is necessary
- your analysis of the excerpt outweighs the quotation
- the source is fully acknowledged

Fair dealing (UK)



Fair use (USA)

Images = higher risk



Images need extra care:

- online ≠ free to reuse
- photos of people → GDPR may apply
- photos of children → ethical approval probably needed
- Museum and gallery images often need permission

Images that are purely decorative usually require permission.

The practical steps to take



Identify third party material

Find all the work in your thesis that doesn't belong to you.



Check copyright or licence status

See whether the item is still in copyright and what the licence it's available under allows you to do with it.



Keep written evidence

Note down what you've done to seek permissions, and keep copies of any letters or emails you send and receive.



Start requesting permissions early

It can take a significant amount of time to receive or negotiate permissions, so start as soon as you realise you'll need the content.



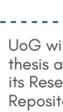
Include, redact, or embargo

Leave the content you get permissions for in your thesis. Remove anything you don't have permission for. If you're waiting for permissions, ask for an embargo* on your thesis.



Send permissions to UoG

Email copies of all of your permissions and correspondence to GRO with your final thesis.



Thesis will be available

UoG will make your thesis available from its Research Repository.

Embargos explained

An embargo = temporary restriction on access.

You might need one if:

- You plan to publish
- You have copyright permissions pending
- The thesis contains commercially sensitive material



Metadata remain visible

Access opens automatically



No permissions? Your options



Low risk

- Remove or redact the material
- Deposit an edited thesis (and the original for closed deposit)



Some risk

- Include it - **but only if you can prove documented, repeated attempts to contact the rights holder.**



Publishing

Previously published work

If you've published before, your own work may not be yours to reuse.

- Check your publisher agreement/CTA (Copyright Transfer Agreement)
- Permission may still be needed
- **Always** acknowledge prior publication (to avoid self-plagiarism)

Publishing from your thesis

Open access theses rarely prevent publication.

- Publishers usually want major revisions to theses before they publish them
- If you're worried, you can apply an embargo while you consider your options

Key takeaways



Copyright applies automatically



Attribution is always needed



Permissions take time - start early



When unsure, ask for help



Safest option: permission or removal



Need help?



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