

## **Submitting your proposal**

Founded in 1904, Manchester University Press is an integral part of the University of Manchester, one of the most prestigious universities in the world, and part of the larger fabric of the vibrant city of Manchester.

Our distinctive brand is known globally for high-quality publications in the humanities and social sciences, involving leading names and up-and-coming-scholars from around the world. We currently publish over 200 books a year, as well as six journals and a growing number of digital subject collections. We are proud of our long history of excellence in scholarly publishing, and alongside this, we are excited to be growing a list of well-researched, thoughtful books aimed at a broader audience. Discoverability and accessibility are at the heart of our publishing principles, as well as traditional standards of excellent author care, rigorous peer review, good design and high production values. We are pleased to say that MUP authors and readers come back to us time and again.

### **Proposal guidelines**

Our commissioning team are always on the lookout for quality proposals to publish in a range of book formats – including monographs, edited collections and trade books for the general reader, plus textbooks, translations and plays in certain subject areas.

If you wish to submit a proposal, please download our [proposal guidelines](#) and submit the completed proposal to the [commissioning editor](#) for the subject area. You may also wish to consult our [house style guidelines](#) while preparing your proposal.

Please do not send entire manuscripts in the first instance; we prefer to see one or two sample chapters and a detailed outline of the project.

For further guidance on preparing a trade book, an edited collection, or revising your PhD thesis into a monograph, see below.

### **Trade non-fiction guidance**

We welcome bold ideas for intellectually rigorous books aimed primarily at a general readership. If you have an idea for a trade book, please contact [Kim Walker](#) with brief details of the project. She will discuss the idea with you and whether it could be a good fit for MUP and will help you to develop a formal proposal.

We look for simple ideas that will capture public imagination, a strong central thread to structure your book, an accessible and elegant writing style, and ideally an existing public profile or strong links into specialist networks to ensure that we can maximise the book's visibility.

### **Textbook guidance**

Manchester University Press is a name trusted by students and scholars worldwide as a clear indication of the best scholarly content. We are always on the lookout for academically rigorous, accessible textbooks that fill gaps in the market and provide convenient, affordable texts for course tutors to set for their students. If you have an idea for a textbook, please contact the commissioning editor for your subject area.

## Edited collections guidance

MUP do not publish conference proceedings, but we are always interested in well-crafted edited volumes. We offer the following guidance for putting together a successful edited collection:

The first question a prospective volume editor should ask themselves is whether they can do (and want to do) what commissioning editors do all the time:

- Persuade busy people to spend time writing for your volume
- Keep contributors to a strict timeframe
- Impose specific house style guidelines and ensure consistency
- Critique, edit and even cut the work of friends, colleagues and senior figures in the field

Publishers will look for the following qualities in an edited volume proposal:

- Coherence: how well does it all fit together as a book?
- Contribution: what is this book going to do, as a collection, and why does that matter?
- Coverage: is it as broad or as focused as it needs to be to do that job well?
- Contributors: who is in it?

## Coherence and where to begin

The best way to begin is by defining an overall purpose for the volume. The book as a whole must amount to more than the sum of its parts.

If the book is going to be based around the best papers from a conference, there are some key things you can do in advance to make your task easier later:

- Tell your potential contributors that you're planning a volume
- Give contributors a set of questions that any piece that ends up in the book will have to explore
- Tell contributors that some (but not all) papers will be used
- Be clear that you'll decide based on the book and its coherence as you put it together

After the conference, choose your chapters wisely, and if there are any gaps or biases in what you're covering, it can be a good idea to commission further essays to fill the holes or provide balance.

## Contribution

You will need to answer the 'so what?' question convincingly, and 'highlighting themes' or filling a gap is rarely going to be enough – some themes and gaps remain unexplored and unfilled precisely because nobody is very interested in them.

As the editor, you have a difficult job because you have a group of different writers with different ideas, approaches and sources, but this is precisely the strength of an edited volume – so really think about what those different approaches, backgrounds, sources, areas of interest etc. can bring to the subject your volume will explore.

Here are some things the book could usefully do, from a range of angles to be determined by your range of contributors and what you ask of them:

- Challenge the existing thought/literature (it should definitely do this)
- Advance an underexplored area or open up a new approach to a much-studied area
- Compare something across cultures, empires, industries (or whatever is appropriate to your area of study)
- Work the chronological angles to show changes or continuities over time, or compare methodological or theoretical approaches

All of your chapters should contribute explicitly to what the book as a whole is doing. A generic chapter structure can be a good way of making things very clear for the reader, so that (for example) everybody starts with a short paragraph on how their chapter relates to the book overall.

## Coverage

Balance is essential. We would advise that if something is really important, have more than one chapter cover it, and have all your contributions be roughly the same length. If it is not important enough for a full-length chapter then replace it with something that is. It is part of the editor's role to do this work.

If there are different kinds of chapter (e.g., a discussion or dialogue, a response), then varying the length makes more sense. Afterwords and forewords can be much shorter too.

If you are grouping your chapters into themed sections, then match them well, explain the rationale for the grouping in your introduction and make the sections of balanced size.

Try to cover all the angles in sufficient depth. Eight chapters on a single region followed by one on another and one that's wildly different again will not convince any peer reviewer that your book is either global or focused, unless you have a very strong reason for following that pattern. It's important to aim for chronological coherence too, and if your volume should cover a period, then do it properly.

On the other hand, not every angle can be covered in one book, and some topics invite more discussion than others. Remember that your volume does need limits, and these should be outlined and justified in a substantial introduction to the volume.

## Contributors

We would advise you to aim for no fewer than eight main chapters and no more than fourteen. It is good to ensure that your contributors include a mixture of career levels:

- One or two 'keynotes' (or equivalent figures in the field, if no conference papers were harmed in the making of this volume)
- Mid-career names who have published on the subject
- Up-and-coming early career researchers and PhD students

It will help if the publisher recognises some of the names, because readers (and therefore buyers) will too. There is no reason not to include post-graduate student contributions as long as they fit the book well and are balanced by and in dialogue with those of the more established scholars. You might also want to think about getting a big name in the field to do a foreword or an afterword of 2,000 to 4,000 words – this can help both coherence and name recognition.

It is important to aim for a geographical spread of contributors and to ensure that your book takes account of scholarship from outside the global region where you are based. Additionally, think about sources, perspectives, interviews, narratives and so on, and consider whether all the voices that should be included are heard. Within reason, the book should draw together a range of diverse perspectives to speak to as broad an audience as possible.

Think about:

- **Subject area**

Do you have a broad enough range of primary sources and perspectives? Are you opening out the field or reinforcing biases? Again, these might come under limitations of the book to be discussed in the introduction.

- **Where the book will be used**

If the subject is studied in particular countries, do you have scholars from those countries in your line-up?

- **Gender balance**

It is essential for a contents list to include a reasonable balance of genders among chapter authors.

- **Contributor location and affiliation**

A range of affiliations and contributor locations will ensure a much broader appeal than a book with multiple chapters from one location or institution. It is vital that you consider whether there are scholars working in the Global South who could contribute to the volume.

- **Chapter length**

As a rule of thumb, chapters should be 6,000 to 8,000 words, including all notes and references. Too short implies superficiality; too long implies bloating. The introduction can be longer or shorter as needed.

- **Chapter abstracts**

Your proposal will need to include detailed chapter synopses as well as a synopsis of the introduction. Don't paste unrevised abstracts into a list – make sure they are consistent in tone and format. Put the synopses in the order that the chapters will appear in the book, so that the reader can see how the volume builds. Always provide a contents list to show that you have thought about the order of the chapters, and if you change their order in the course of revisions, change your chapter numbering, your synopses and your contents list so the peer reviewer will not get confused.

- **Sample Chapters**

You will usually need to provide at least one (preferably two) draft sample chapters for the volume. Your draft chapters should be standardised to the point where the peer reviewers and the publisher will be reassured of your ability to do the work required to get a whole volume into shape. This means addressing the styles used for headings, references, punctuation and so on. Even if they aren't in the publisher's house style, it's good to be consistent.

- **The introduction**

The introduction to your edited volume should do the following:

- Articulate the current state of the field

- Place the volume within the relevant literature
- Outline its many clear contributions to the field and explain what each chapter will do to further those contributions
- Acknowledge any gaps in the collection and define the perimeters of the volume – what won't it do, and why?

In your synopsis of the introduction, you'll need to go into some detail about each of these points. Readers (and peer reviewers) want to see what you feel the relevant literature is and will need to be convinced that this book hangs together sensibly. Essentially, an introduction synopsis should be a mini-introduction in draft form.

## **PhD to book guidance**

MUP do not publish unrevised PhD theses and do not accept unrevised thesis materials for consideration.

In a small number of cases, where the research is of exceptionally high quality and broad appeal, we can consider a book that takes thesis research as its starting point and expands upon it significantly, on the strict understanding that it must have been entirely rewritten and restructured for a wider audience. In these instances, authors must embargo their PhD thesis to a date several years beyond the book's publication and ensure it is not freely available in a library repository or via ProQuest.

We ask that books based on PhD research do something different to the thesis, whether that be in terms of framing, case studies, comparison or content more generally. Usually this involves widening the viewpoint and speaking to the significance of the research beyond the subfield of the thesis. Please contact our editors for our guidelines on making the transition from thesis to book project and include in your proposal: (1) a section outlining the changes you have made, (2) details of whether the thesis is available publicly, (3) the names of your supervisors and external examiners.