

Faculty Board's working committee

Instructions for the public defence of doctoral theses

The public defence of a doctoral thesis is the main examination component of third-cycle studies. It constitutes an independent review of the doctoral student's thesis and defence thereof.

Preparation

The public defence of a doctoral thesis is initiated by the department submitting a request to the faculty office, generally through the supervisor or head of subject. The request must be received at least six weeks prior to the public defence of the doctoral thesis, but preferably earlier. The request form is available on the faculties' website.

A suitable venue must be booked before the request is submitted. The proposal for external reviewer and examining committee members is to be justified in the request.

The dean of doctoral studies takes decisions on the public defence of the doctoral thesis, including the decision to appoint the external reviewer, examining committee members and the chair of the public defence.

The public defence of the doctoral thesis is to take place during the semester. The public defence is to be announced at least three weeks in advance; this three-week period is also to be placed during the semester. The dean of doctoral studies can grant an exemption from these requirements if there are special grounds for doing so.

Any decision to cancel a public defence of a doctoral thesis is taken by the dean of doctoral studies after consultation with the relevant department. If the decision to cancel a public defence is due to the external reviewer or an examining committee member forwarding substantial advance criticism of the doctoral thesis to the extent that it is unlikely it will pass, the parties to which the doctoral thesis has been distributed are to be informed that it has been withdrawn and will not be submitted.

The faculties provide a printing grant and compensation for expenses as financial support. The amounts are set in the faculties' annual budget. The compensation amount for expenses is paid without the department needing to submit a request, while the printing grant requires an application to the faculty office.

Chair of the public defence

The chair of the public defence is responsible for ensuring the public defence of the doctoral thesis meets the University's and the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology's regulations.

The chair of the public defence is to ensure that the audience, including the examining committee members, can easily hear what is being said. The chair of the public defence must be notified in advance if the external reviewer or author wishes to use technical aids to illustrate their reasoning.

The chair of the public defence is responsible for booking a venue for the examining committee's meeting and for starting the meeting. The chair of the public defence is also responsible for ensuring the meeting minutes are submitted to the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology's secretary for third-cycle studies.

External reviewer and examining committee

The external reviewer must generally have at least associate professor qualifications and may not work at the Joint Faculties of Humanities and Theology.

The examining committee is to consist of three members, at least one of whom does not work at Lund University. The members must have at least associate professor qualifications unless there are special grounds. Both genders are to be represented in the examining committee unless there are special grounds.

At least one substitute is to be appointed to the examining committee. The substitute is to be prepared to step in should a member of the examining committee be prevented from taking part in the public defence of the doctoral thesis. Note that if the substitute needs to step in, the examining committee as a whole is still required to satisfy the requirements outlined in the previous paragraph.

The examining committee appoints a chair from among its members.

The doctoral student should not be in contact with the examining committee members during the period immediately prior to the public defence. Any public events in which the doctoral student and any examining committee members will take part should be scheduled after the public defence of the doctoral thesis.

Thesis defence

The public defence of the doctoral thesis begins by the chair of the public defence welcoming the author, external reviewer and examining committee members and declaring the public defence open. The chair then gives the author an opportunity to provide brief additional information or corrections to the doctoral thesis if needed.

The doctoral thesis review begins by the external reviewer or author giving an approximately 15-minute presentation of the main points and conclusions. Well in advance of the public defence, the chair should come to an agreement with the external reviewer and the author regarding who will summarise the doctoral thesis. If the external reviewer does the summary, the author is to be given the opportunity to briefly comment on the presentation.

It is important that the public defence subsequently develops into an academic discussion between the external reviewer and the author about the doctoral thesis' strengths and weaknesses. The public defence is not an examination of knowledge or an opportunity for the external reviewer to present their own thoughts and findings; rather, it is a review of a submitted text. The external reviewer should focus their review on the essentials of the content. Shortcomings in the formalities, language, style and proofreading should be pointed out and exemplified, but should not dominate the public examination. The author should answer questions and address criticism as objectively and concisely as possible. Consensus does not need to be sought.

The review is concluded by the external reviewer summarising the strengths and weaknesses of the doctoral thesis.

After the review, the chair of the public defence opens the floor to questions from the examining committee members. The chair then opens the floor to questions from the audience. The chair declares the thesis defence closed once everyone has had the chance to express themselves.

The entire thesis defence process generally takes around two hours and should not exceed three hours without a break.

There is no formal dress code for the external reviewer or author. The chair, who has overall responsibility for hosting the public defence, can offer advice.

Remote attendance

The external reviewer and one of the examining committee members may attend remotely. The other examining committee members, the author and the chair of the public defence must be at the specified venue during the entire public defence of the doctoral thesis.

The chair of the public defence is responsible for ensuring that any external reviewer or examining committee member taking part remotely has a stable internet connection of sufficient quality. The chair is also to ensure that participants have access to technical support at their location during the public defence, and that they can be reached by telephone should their connection be lost.

The department may decide to broadcast the public defence online. Recording the thesis defence is prohibited, however. Everyone at the venue must be notified if the public defence is to be broadcast live through the internet. It is also appropriate to reserve part of the premises for audience members who do not wish to be visible in the live broadcast.

The examining committee's meeting

The examining committee normally meets immediately after the public defence of the doctoral thesis. The examining committee's task is to assess whether the doctoral thesis and its defence are to be awarded an assessment of pass or fail. The committee appoints a chair from among its members.

The meeting begins by the chair of the public defence informing the examining committee members of their task.

The external reviewer and supervisor should attend the beginning of the meeting to respond to questions and otherwise assist the committee. The examining committee members then meet on their own to discuss the doctoral thesis and its defence and to decide on the assessment. The committee chair may give the external reviewer and supervisor permission to attend the entire meeting.

If there are any remote attendees, the committee chair is to ensure that no outsiders are able to perceive what is said or heard.

If the assessment is fail, reasons are to be given in writing. Individual members may submit any reservations in writing even if the assessment is pass. Any justification and written reservations are a formal part of the minutes and are submitted to the faculty secretary through the chair of the public defence.