

Instructions for the examining committee at a public defence of a doctoral thesis

Each of the members of the examining committee must have a doctoral degree and must be academically qualified university teachers/researchers with at least the equivalent of the qualifications required for appointment to a readership/associate professorship. At least one of the committee members is to represent another seat of learning. All committee members are to be broadly familiar with the content of the thesis from an academic point of view.

Disqualification

There must be no grounds for disqualification of the members of the examining committee in respect of supervisors, the author of the thesis or the project. See <http://www.codex.vr.se>. For example, members of the examining committee may not be conducting ongoing research with or have co-published with the author of the thesis or any of the supervisors within the past 5 years. If an examining committee member has supervised any of the doctoral student's supervisors, this must have occurred more than ten years ago. Such a situation ought to be avoided. Written justification is required if a former doctoral student or supervisor is to be appointed as a member of the examining committee.

Public defence of doctoral thesis

The examining committee's task is to review and examine the thesis and its defence. The national qualitative targets for third-cycle courses and study programmes described in the *högskoleförordningen (SFS 1993:100)* (Sweden's Higher Education Ordinance) are to form the basis of this examination. Consequently, the purpose of some of the examining committee's questions ought to be to identify how the national qualitative targets have been achieved (see below), unless this has been clarified during the external reviewer's part of the defence.

The following points are to be assessed:

- Clarity in the described purpose and questions posed
- Whether or not adequate methods have been used
- Relevance, originality and novelty
- Whether or not adequate interpretation and discussion of the scientific results has been

carried out

- If the national qualitative targets have been met.

Suggestions for questions for the examination of the defence:

- Does the author of the thesis show evidence of a deep knowledge and understanding of the research field?
- Has the author of the thesis mastered the relevant literature in the specific subject area?
- Is the author of the thesis participating actively in academic debate?
- Does the author of the thesis handle questions and criticism in a factual and appropriate manner, regardless of how the questioner has posed the question?
- Can the author of the thesis reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of his/her own work?
- Can the author of the thesis place his/her results in a broader academic and medical context?

Examining committee meeting

The examining committee convenes directly after the defence of the thesis. The external reviewer, the chair for the public defence, and the main supervisor all have the right to attend this meeting and participate in the deliberations, but not in the decision. The examining committee may, if necessary, co-opt assistant supervisors to the meeting. The examining committee then appoints a chairperson from within the group. At the meeting, the external reviewer is given the opportunity to provide his/her opinion on the thesis, and the doctoral student's ability to respond to questions and to conduct a line of academic argument. The external reviewer also has the chance to ask the supervisor additional questions about the thesis work. The supervisor is asked to give his/her opinion of the independence achieved by the doctoral student and his/her contribution to the thesis work.

Grade

A single grade is set for the thesis and its defence: pass or fail. In grading the thesis and its defence, both the content of the thesis and its public defence are to be taken into account. The grade that the majority of the examining committee agree on shall apply. The examining committee decides whether or not reasons are to be given for the grade. Where the examining committee is not unanimous in its decision on the grade to be applied,



reasons must always be given and a protest may be registered where applicable. If the thesis is failed, the reasons must always be given. The chair of the examining committee is responsible for the author of the thesis being notified of the examining committee's decision directly after its meeting has concluded. A record of the examining committee meeting including any attachments (reasons for the decision) are to be submitted as soon as possible after the defence to the Department's administrator for third-cycle courses and programmes. The administrator sends this documentation to the Registrar at Umeå University.

National qualitative targets

Doctoral degree:

Knowledge and understanding

Objective: Demonstrate broad knowledge within, and a systematic understanding of, the area of research.

Objective: Demonstrate in-depth and up-to-date specialist knowledge within a defined part of the area of research.

Objective: Show familiarity with scientific methodology in general.

Objective: Show particular familiarity with the methods used in the specific area of research.

Competence and skills

Objective: Demonstrate the ability to conduct scientific analysis and synthesis as well as independent critical review and evaluation of novel and complex phenomena, questions and situations.

Objective: Demonstrate the ability to identify and formulate questions and to plan and use adequate methods to conduct research and carry out other qualified tasks critically, independently and creatively, with scientific exactitude and within specified time limits; and to examine and assess his/her own work.

Objective: By means of a thesis, demonstrate the ability to make a significant contribution to the body of knowledge through his/her own research

Objective: Demonstrate the ability to present and discuss research and research results in national and international contexts, both orally and in writing, and with authority, in dialogue with the scientific community and the community in general.

Objective: Demonstrate the ability to identify needs for further knowledge.

Objective: Demonstrate the prerequisites for making a contribution to the development of society within research and education and in other qualified professional contexts; and for supporting the learning of others.

Judgement and approach

Objective: Show intellectual independence and scientific probity and the ability to make ethical judgements in matters of research.

Objective: Show a deep awareness of the possibilities and limitations of science and its role in society and human responsibility for how it is used.

