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Guidelines -- ”Trial lecture at the end of the PhD study” @ Dept. of Chemistry

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The trial lecture on a given topic is an obligatory and independent part of the examination for the PhD degree. The trial lecture is described formally in UiB regulations and also in faculty regulations. According to the all-UiB guidelines, the purpose of the trial lecture is “to test the candidate's ability to acquire knowledge beyond the topic of the thesis, and the ability to communicate it in a lecture setting. The trial lecture must be on an assigned topic.” Our faculty summarizes that the candidate is to demonstrate an ability to communicate research-based knowledge and insight.

The topic of the trial lecture is set by the Faculty and advised to the candidate ten (10) working days before the lecture. The trial lecture is held in the language of the PhD thesis.

The present guidelines address

- What is a suitable topic
- Expectations to the trial lecture
- A formal and detailed procedure of how to conduct the trial lecture and its evaluation
- Criteria of evaluation
- What happens in the case of a failed trial lecture

1. What is a suitable topic

The topic should normally not derive from central themes in the PhD project. The chemistry FU (Committee for researcher education) encourages the selection of topics that may be of interest across the research groups of our institute and, furthermore, that allows communication with a broader audience than the research group to which the candidate belongs. The topic may well be chosen with an eye to contemporary issues that are linked to the (broader) field of the candidate’s study.

2. Expectations to the trial lecture

A trial lecture at the Department of Chemistry is expected to be at a high level both in terms of the scientific contents and the way the topic is presented. We should feel comfortable with inviting national and international guests to attend the lecture, and we should be happy to see the department represented by the candidate giving this talk also externally. In short, the quality of the lecture should be at a level that is acceptable for a newly educated researcher from a chemistry department of good standing.

3. Procedure for trial lecture on a given topic

The formal procedure of how trial lectures are organized and evaluated at the Department of Chemistry is specified on the next page.

4. Evaluation of the trial lecture

The lecture is evaluated both on contents and presentation, with possible conclusions Passed and Fail. Evaluation criteria and directions for documenting the considerations of the committee are embedded in the designated form to be used for reporting the conclusion from the evaluation. The form is available at the end of this document.

5. Action in the case of a failed trial lecture

The trial lecture is evaluated on a Pass/Fail grading. If a candidate receives an evaluation of **Fail** in her/his first attempt to give a trial lecture and the Faculty confirms this grade, a new trial lecture must be held. The new trial lecture must be given on a new topic, and no later than six (6) months after the first attempt. A new trial lecture may be held only once. To the extent possible, the same committee that assessed the first lecture should assess the new lecture.

The procedures for appeal against rejection of a trial lecture are laid out in Section 14-1 of Regulations for the PhD degree at the University of Bergen.

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Procedure for trial lecture on a given topic – for the PhD degree

1. The evaluation committee consists of three members, one of whom is appointed leader. If available, the leader of the evaluation committee for the candidates PhD thesis is member and leader of the evaluation committee for the trial lecture on a given topic.
2. The leader of the evaluation committee welcomes the audience to the trial lecture and points out the formal role it holds as part of the examination for the PhD degree, before leaving the floor to the candidate.
3. The trial lecture has a duration of 45 minutes. Up to 5 minutes of this time may be used as a question session, led by the leader of the evaluation committee.
4. After the lecture has finished, the committee withdraws. No preliminary conclusion is to be offered on the evaluation of the lecture.
5. The evaluation committee assesses the trial lecture according to the criteria on the designated form.
    a. If the committee reaches a conclusion of "Pass", only brief comments are required on each of the items in the evaluation form.
    b. If, after an initial discussion, the committee finds "Fail" to be a possible conclusion, a rather detailed written assessment of the items in the evaluation form is warranted. The overall assessment should aim to give transparency to the final conclusion.
    c. The committee should aim to reach a unanimous conclusion. Giving the candidate the benefit of doubt, a conclusion of Fail requires a unanimous committee.
6. The completed evaluation form should be returned to the department without undue delay, for further reporting to the Faculty and for informing the candidate on the evaluation.

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Evaluation of trial lecture on given topic – for the PhD degree

(to be completed and submitted by the evaluation committee after the trial lecture has been held)

PhD candidate: _____
Title of trial lecture: _____
Date: _____

The committee should comment briefly on the performance on the following criteria before making their conclusion, guided by the general expectations that the lecture should be at a level acceptable for a newly educated researcher from a chemistry department of good standing.

1. Choice of material

[The presentation should be faithful to the given topic. It should include sufficient background to be accessible to the average chemistry major. The presentation should be updated on current research. The amount of material should be suitable for the scheduled duration.]

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2. Structure and organization of the lecture

[The presentation should be logically structured and with suitable organization of the information. It should contain a conclusion or summary that ties back to the aims of the lecture. Sources should be properly cited.]

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3. Comprehension and scientific maturity

[The candidate should place the given topic in a larger context, linking it to contemporary issues where natural. The candidate should demonstrate overview and command of the subject.]

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4. Presentation

[Visual aids should be legible and the figures clear and useful. The candidate should avoid jargon and excessive use of abbreviations. The pace should be suitable. The candidate should finish on time.]

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Additional comments / Overall assessment

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In conclusion, the trial lecture is evaluated to: ☐ Pass ☐ Fail

Signature of the members of the committee

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