

Routines for the Assessment of PhD Theses

The Faculty of Humanities, University of Bergen, October 2019

The assessment committee's composition and mandate

The assessment committee should consist of at least three (3) members. Both men and women should be represented, and a majority should not have any academic connection to the University of Bergen. If possible, one of the members should represent an international institution. All members must have a PhD or equivalent qualifications.

- The assessment committee evaluates whether the doctoral thesis satisfies the formal requirements in the PhD regulations and the Faculty's programme and guidelines.
- The assessment committee submits a jointly written evaluation.
- The assessment committee propose a topic for the trial lecture when the doctoral thesis has been approved.
- The assessment committee's leader should be employed at the Faculty of Humanities.

Assignments for the committee leader:

- Is responsible for organizing the committee's work, including time management.
- Should be an active member of the committee.
- Should act as a link between the committee and the Faculty.
- Should, as soon as possible, set a tentative date for the public defence and communicate this to the department.
- Should send the topic of the trial lecture to the department, minimum three (3) weeks before the public defence.
- Should act as the departments contact person for the external opponents and arrange to meet them upon their arrival in Bergen.

Allocation of time:

- In general, it should not take more than four (4) weeks from the time the application for the assessment has been approved until the committee is appointed.
- In general, it should not take more than five (5) months from the date of submission to the public defence.
- The committee's work should not normally exceed three (3) months.
- The doctoral thesis is made public no later than two (2) weeks before the public defence.

The committee's assessment of the doctoral thesis

- The assessment committee must evaluate if the doctoral thesis meets the formal requirements outlined in the PhD regulations and the Faculty's programme and guidelines.
- The assessment committee provides one unanimous decision describing their recommendation
- The recommendation must be written in English or a Scandinavian language.
- In case of disagreement among the committee members, the minority and majority groups must provide justification for their evaluations
- The recommendation should include a description of the character and scope of the doctoral thesis.
- The quality of the different sections of the doctoral thesis must be evaluated.
- The recommendation must provide a clear and precise conclusion explaining if the scientific requirements have been met and that the doctoral thesis can be defended for the PhD degree.
- The recommendation should normally be between 4-6 pages.

Level of the doctoral thesis requirements

A Norwegian doctoral thesis is a certificate of scientific research competence. In the assessment of the thesis, the committee must place particular emphasis on to what extent the thesis is an independent and coherent scientific work with a high standard for the research questions, the methodological, theoretical and empirical foundations, documentation, use of literature and the written presentation. It is especially important that an evaluation of the materials and methods are appropriate for the questions that are raised in the doctoral thesis, and that the arguments and conclusions are tenable. In the assessment, the committee must pay special attention to whether the submitted thesis is an independent and coherent scientific work of international standard, and if the thesis fulfils the minimum requirements for scientific research competence.

In general

The doctoral thesis must correspond to the equivalent of 2.5 years of full-time employment (FTE).

The doctoral thesis must explain:

- a) The background of the research. Where the thesis places itself within this particular field of study, and how the thesis expands on previous research.
- b) The main research questions
- c) The theoretical approach and methodology

Joint authorship must be defined in relation to national and international guidelines.

The doctoral thesis must contain a brief abstract in English, of between 3000-5000 characters

Monograph

The doctoral thesis must be publishable

The thesis must represent a coherent whole.

The doctoral thesis can be partially or completely co-authored.

If the thesis is co-authored, the candidate's responsibilities must be clearly presented when the thesis is submitted.

Article based doctoral thesis

The articles must be published or ready for publication. If articles are edited or modified between earlier publication and the publication of the doctoral thesis, these modifications must be included in the thesis.

Requirements for the extended abstract (Kappa)

- a) The extended abstract must tie the articles together and strengthen the overall coherence of the doctoral thesis.
- b) The extended abstract must place the research conducted in the thesis into a broader scientific context of historical, methodological and/or theoretical character.
- c) The extended abstract must be of scientific value in itself and not simply a summary of the content in the individual articles.
- d) The extended abstract must be written solely by the candidate.

Co-authorship

- a) PhD candidates should be the first author of at least half of the articles.
- b) At the time of submission, a specification of the candidate's contributions for each article must be submitted on a separate form.

Formal requirements for the recommendation

- Title: The recommendation from the assessment committee that has assessed [NN's] doctoral thesis [Title] for the degree of [degree] for the University of Bergen.
- Assessment committee member's names, titles, and institutions
- A brief description of the doctoral thesis' format (monograph/article based with an extended abstract)
- Type (theoretical/empirical work) and extent (number of pages).

- Description of the doctoral thesis' scientific contribution and the most central aspects regarding theory, hypotheses, materials, methods, and findings.
- Assessment of strong and weak sides of the doctoral thesis.
- A clear conclusion of to what extent the committee finds the doctoral thesis worthy of public defence.
- The recommendations must be dated.
- If the doctoral thesis is submitted for the second time, or the committee has accepted the thesis with minor revisions, this should be presented at the start of the report. The committee should briefly explain to what extent the candidate has improved upon their recommendations and what changes have been made.

The committee's evaluation should normally result in two possible recommendations: a positive recommendation or rejection.

Positive recommendation

The doctoral thesis is deemed worthy of a public defence when it is evaluated as an independent and complete scientific work of international standard, in which the candidate satisfies the minimum requirements for scientific research competence (cf. level of requirements). The doctoral thesis with a positive recommendation can still have several weaknesses, as long as these are of such a character that they can be defended in a public defence without being corrected in the assessed thesis.

Rejection

The doctoral thesis is not deemed worthy to be defended in a public defence if the following applies:

The committee must recommend rejection of the doctoral thesis if the committee finds that more extensive changes in theory, hypotheses, materials and/or method/analyses are necessary for the work to be recommended for defence.

A detailed account of the reasons for the rejection must be provided when the committee recommends rejection. The committee can recommend submission of the same thesis for a new assessment after extensive changes or choose to not recommend a new submission.

The committee should, only under extraordinary circumstances, recommend that the doctoral thesis should not be submitted in a new version.

A doctoral thesis that has been rejected may be re-submitted only once.

Minor revisions to the submitted doctoral thesis

The [Regulations for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor \(PhD\) at the University of Bergen](#) also allows minor reworking of the thesis.

Section 11-5. Reworking of a submitted doctoral thesis

The assessment committee may, on the basis of the submitted doctoral thesis and any additional material, recommend that the faculty itself permit the candidate to make minor revisions to the thesis before the committee submits its final report. The committee must provide a written list of the specific items that the candidate must rework.

If the faculty itself allows minor revisions to the thesis, a deadline up to but not exceeding three (3) months will be set for completing such revisions. A new deadline for submission of the committee's final report will also be set.

The faculty's decision pursuant to this paragraph may not be appealed by the PhD candidate.

If the committee finds that extensive changes are needed in order to deem the thesis worthy of public defence, the committee must reject the thesis.

If the candidate does not keep the set deadline or does not take the opportunity to make minor revisions, the faculty will ask the committee to complete their assessment of the doctoral thesis as originally submitted.

With submission after minor revisions, the doctoral thesis in its entirety must be assessed again by the same assessment committee.

The Faculty of Humanities regards the use of allowing minor revisions for the doctoral thesis as something that should be permitted only in extraordinary circumstances and advises the assessment committee to refrain from its use.

Trial lecture

If the doctoral thesis is approved, the candidate must hold a 45-minute trial lecture on a topic specified by the assessment committee.

Time for questions or discussions is not normally a part of the trial lecture.

The topic of the trial lecture is to be recommended by the same assessment committee that has evaluated the doctoral thesis.

Normally, the same committee that has assessed the doctoral thesis will also evaluate the trial lecture.

The department is responsible for announcing the trial lecture topic to the candidate ten (10) working days before the lecture takes place.

The trial lecture is an independent part of the PhD degree and is evaluated as pass or fail before the public defence.

The trial lecture is normally held the day before the public defence.

The trial lecture should focus on a topic that is related, but not identical to the theme of the doctoral thesis.

The purpose of the trial lecture is that the doctoral candidate can demonstrate the ability to communicate scientifically based knowledge to a wider audience. The lecture should normally be conducted in such a way that advanced students in the field will understand and profit from listening to the lecture.