



Information to opponent, respondent, examining committee members, supervisor and chairman of the public defense of a doctoral thesis/dissertation

The following actors participate at the public defense of a thesis:

Respondent (PhD student)

Examining committee, three or five members and a backup member

Opponent

Chair of the public defense

General information

The members of the examining committee are the examiners of the doctoral thesis as well as its defense. The opponent has no examining role, but is a prerequisite for the public defense to be meaningful. It is also important that the public defense is conducted correctly according to the current regulations (the Swedish Higher Education Ordinance 1993: 100, Swedish Constitution 2010: 1064), which is the task of the chairman of the public defense to ensure.

Proceedings of the public defense

1. The chair welcomes everyone and presents the actors and the title of the thesis
2. The respondent reports any corrections and may submit an errata list with errors and corrections identified after the thesis has been printed.
3. The opponent and the respondent present the respondent's thesis (see instructions below)
4. The respondent and opponent are given the opportunity to comment on the presentations
5. The opponent conducts a peer review of the thesis with the respondent and leads a scientific discussion with the respondent about the respondent's thesis.
6. The chair invites the members of the Examining committee to pose questions to the respondent.
7. The chair invites the backup member of the Examining board to pose questions to the respondent.
8. The chair invites the audience to pose questions to the respondent
9. The public defense is terminated and the examining committee members are gathered to review their decision (see instructions below)
10. The Chair of the Examining committee will announce the decisions in public.

Instructions to the Examining committee

Constitution and task of the Examining committee

The Examining committee members (three or five persons) shall grade the thesis and the respondent's defense of the thesis (pass or fail). The Review Board for Postgraduate Education at University of Gävle appoints the members of the committee. When appointing the members, the Review Board for Postgraduate Education shall, in consultation with the committee members, appoint a member as the Chair of the committee.

Preliminary assessment of the thesis before the public defense

The Examining committee shall make a preliminary assessment of the thesis. The preliminary assessment should answer Questions 1-3, as indicated under the heading *Assessment of the thesis* below. The Examining committee shall answer each question with a categorical "yes" or "no" and provide a brief explanation for the assessment. The preliminary assessment must be submitted in writing by the chair of the Examining committee to the University's Review Board for Postgraduate Education at the latest 6 weeks before the public defense. Regardless of whether the thesis is accepted or rejected in the preliminary assessment, the Examining committee shall make a statement in the form of a preliminary assessment.

Assessment of thesis

In the preliminary assessment, the Examining committee shall take into account Questions 1-3 below. In the final assessment after the public defense the Examining committee shall consider Questions 1-4:

1. Does the thesis (the thesis frame and individual papers) fulfill the quality and quantity that can be expected of a doctoral thesis?
2. Does the thesis correspond to four years of full-time postgraduate education?
3. Does the thesis provide a contribution to the knowledge within the scientific field of the thesis?
4. Is the respondent's discussion with the opponent and ability to answer questions as well as discussing the significance of his/her results in the field of research satisfactory?

The Examining committee's assessment is subjective and requires both the expertise and integrity of the members of the committee. The requirement for the number of individual papers is specified in the general curriculum of the education. This requirement has been controlled by the Review Board for Postgraduate Education at the time when the doctoral candidate applied for the permission to defend the thesis. Therefore, the number of individual papers is not decisive in the Examining committee's assessment. It is therefore the scope and quality of the thesis that should be assessed by the Examining committee. This means that fewer more extensive papers with the doctoral student as a first author, published in well respected journals, probably reflects higher quality than more, but less extensive papers with a large number of authors in which the doctoral student is not first author. The doctoral student's contribution to each individual paper must be reported in the application for the defense submitted to the Review Board for Postgraduate Education. This report shall be submitted to the Examining committee if they so wish. If, in the course of the public defense, remarks of such extraordinary nature appear that the Examining committee considers it necessary to carry out specific investigations or consultations (e.g., in the event of suspicions of research misconduct) in advance of their decision, the Examining committee should adjourn the meeting. The adjournment should be short.

Decision-making meeting after the public defense

After the public defense, the members of the Examining committee are gathered immediately to review the grade. This meeting takes place immediately after the public defense and consists of two parts:

1. The Examining committee members and the opponent participate in the first part. The Examining committee's reserve member and the candidate's supervisors can also be invited to participate by the Examining committee. The committee's reserve member, supervisors and opponent can comment on the thesis work and the thesis defense and answer questions from the Examining committee, but neither the supervisors, nor the opponent or the reserve member participate in the decision.
2. Only the Examining committee members participate in the second part. In this part the members of the Examining committee will decide on the grade. The Examining committee decides whether the grade is approved or failed. Majority decision applies. A member may present a reservation against the decision; in that case a special motivation shall be given.

Instructions for opponent, respondent, supervisor and chairman

Instructions for the presentation of the thesis by the opponent and the respondent

Both the opponent and the respondent usually present the respondent's thesis work. The principal supervisor of the respondent shall discuss the division of the presentation between the respondent and the opponent during the public defense well in advance of the public defense. Normally, this presentation takes about 45 minutes, where the opponent begins to present an overview of the research field and puts the thesis in a scientific context, and then the respondent presents the thesis work. Deviations from this may occur by agreement between the respondent and the opponent.

Other instructions to the opponent

A main objective of the opposition is that the respondent should be able to defend his/her work and demonstrate his/her knowledge. It is the opponent's role to enable this in a critical discussion with the respondent where the respondent is given proper opportunity to respond. The opponent will critically review the entire part of the thesis, both the thesis frame as well as the individual papers. The opponent should emphasize strong as well as weak parts of the thesis, and the opposition should concern both technical and practical details as well as conceptual and theoretical problems, and how the thesis results can be incorporated into a broader context.

Instructions for supervisors

The principal supervisor of the doctoral student is responsible for that the application for defense is submitted to the Review Board for Postgraduate Education. The supervisor shall also contact the opponent well in advance of the public defense and ensure that the opponent is well-acquainted with the procedure and purpose of public defense act.

Instructions to the Chair of the public defense

The chair is appointed by the Review Board for Postgraduate Education and is normally an official at University of Gävle. The chair is the person who coordinates the different steps during the public defense (see above). The chair is therefore expected to be well acquainted with the procedure of the public defense as described in this document, and to be prepared to handle any possible complications associated with the defense act. If the public defense becomes prolonged, the chairman may introduce a pause in the defense act. The public defense can be terminated before the opposition is finalized, but only if special circumstances arise (e.g., any of the key persons becomes ill).

Other instructions

Language at the public defense

The public defense can be held in Swedish or English. The respondent and opponent shall agree on the choice of language. Normally, the public defense is held in Swedish if both the respondent and the opponent have Swedish as their mother tongue.

Suspicious of unrighteousness

In the event of suspicion of scientific misconduct, plagiarism etc. or other irregularities in connection with the examination of the thesis or at the public defense, the Review Board for Postgraduate Education shall immediately be informed and the matter shall be forwarded to the Disciplinary Board of the University of Gävle.