Tasks and Division of Responsibilities in Connection with Defence of Doctoral Thesis at the University of Skövde

1 Introduction

The purpose of the instructions is to summarise issues concerning the division of roles at the defence of a doctoral thesis at the University of Skövde. More detailed information about the regulations surrounding examination is available in “Guidelines for Examinations in Third-Cycle Studies” [Riktlinjer för examination inom utbildning på forskarnivå].

The examination of a doctoral thesis is performed as a public discussion between the external reviewer and the author of the thesis (public defence).

The doctoral thesis, which is the subject of the examination, may be written as a monograph or as a compilation thesis.

2 Participants

The participants of the public defence are:

- the chair of the public defence
- the external reviewer [Sw. opponent]
- the author of the thesis/doctoral student
- the examining committee, consisting of three people, appointed by the Faculty Board. The examining committee is led by the chair of the examining committee. There is also a substitute for the members appointed in the event that someone on the examining committee is absent.
- the supervisors

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1 This is a translation of the Swedish version (Uppgifter och ansvarsfördelning i samband med disputation vid Högskolan i Skövde, registration number 2020/575). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document shall prevail.
• an audience from academia and the surrounding community

3 Before the Public Defence

The thesis is normally sent to the external reviewer, the examining committee, and the chair of the public defence no later than the same day as the thesis is published (nailed), i.e. no later than three weeks before the date of the public defence. The external reviewer may, if desired, contact the main supervisor to obtain the thesis in an earlier stage (e.g. as proofreading).

4 The Public defence

A public defence at the University of Skövde (the University) shall take place as described in appendix 3 of the “Guidelines for Examinations in Third-Cycle Studies” [Riktlinjer för examination inom utbildning på forskarnivå].

5 The Tasks of the External Reviewer [Sw. opponent]

Before the public defence

• the external reviewer shall critically scrutinise the whole thesis and prepare the public discussion and examination,

• the external reviewer must report any suspicion of research misconduct to the University’s registry officer,

• it is the external reviewer’s duty to report any circumstances that may constitute bias. For more information, see the University’s “Guidelines on issues of disqualification” [Riktlinjer om jäv].

During the public defence

• If chosen as an alternative: the external reviewer shall give a summary and his/her own interpretation of the content of the thesis, and place it in relation to other research in the subject area.

• the external reviewer shall perform the public discussion and examination, which means highlighting the central results, critically discussing the thesis, and engaging in a discussion about the content with the author. (The external reviewer discusses the thesis with the author by asking questions and providing views, thus making it possible for the author to demonstrate expected knowledge and ability to discuss the results. This is the central part of the public defence, as the author’s ability to respond to questions is included in the grading.)
After the public defence

- the external reviewer is expected to participate in the examining committee’s deliberations, but leaves the meeting before the examining committee’s decision.

6 The Tasks of the Examining Committee

Before the public defence

- the examining committee shall critically scrutinise the whole thesis, and prepare the examination,

- the members of the examining committee must report any suspicion of research misconduct to the University’s registry officer,

- it is the examining committee members’ duty to report any circumstances that may constitute bias. For more information, see the University’s ”Guidelines on issues of disqualification” [Riktlinjer om jäv].

During the public defence

- the members of the examining committee shall ask the author questions about the content of the thesis, and assess the author’s ability to defend the thesis, and answer the questions from the external reviewer and the audience.

After the public defence

- the examining committee has a meeting, and appoints a chair from among themselves (one of the three regular members). The examining committee is quorate when all members are present. The external reviewer is expected to participate in the deliberations. Supervisors are allowed to attend, and one of them (normally the main supervisor) must attend the meeting and participate in the deliberations. When the deliberations are deemed finished, the external reviewer and all supervisors are to leave the room.

- The examining committee decides on a grade. Majority rules, and the grade is only given as pass or fail. When grading, both the thesis’ content and the author’s presentation, discussion and defence thereof should be assessed.

- If the examining committee passes the thesis, the reasons must not be shown in the examination minutes. The same applies if an individual member disagrees with the decision.

- If the thesis fails, the reasons shall be stated. The same applies if an individual member disagrees with the decision. If the thesis fails, it is also possible for the supervisor to provide a special statement.

- The examination minutes from the examining committee’s meeting are completed and signed by all members of the examining committee.
- The examining committee announces its decision as soon as possible.
- The examination minutes from the examining committee’s meeting are given to the chair of the public defence.

7 The Chair of the Public Defence’s Tasks

Before the public defence, the chair of the public defence shall
- familiarise with the tasks and responsibilities, and, if needed, communicate any questions with the persons concerned (mainly the main supervisor, doctoral student, and director of PhD studies).

During the public defence, the chair of the public defence shall
- lead public defence proceedings,
- be responsible for the public defence being carried out properly. Check that everyone is present when the public defence begins. If the external reviewer or a member of the examining committee is absent, the chair of the public defence shall investigate whether the public defence can be moved to a later time on the same day if the reason for the absence is a delay, or ensure that the member of the examining committee is replaced by the designated substitute.
- welcome everyone, introduce the author, the thesis title, the external reviewer, and the members of the examining committee,
- present any relevant information about where the research has been carried out, and about other involved parties,
- present the procedure of the public defence, and ensure that it runs as it should,
- hand over to the author of the thesis who reports on any corrections of typos and/or other corrections in the thesis (errata),
- hand over to the author and external reviewer in the chosen order,
- give the members of the examining committee the opportunity to ask the author questions and comment on the thesis,
- give all audience members the opportunity to ask the author questions and comment on the thesis,
- thank the participants and declare the public defence closed.

After the public defence, the chair of the public defence shall
- hand over materials for the examination minutes and any other information to the examining committee,
- ensure that the examining committee appoints a chair from among themselves. Then, the public defence chair leaves the meeting.
- check that the examination minutes are completed and signed.
be responsible for the signed examination minutes from the meeting being handed to the University’s registry officer for registration and dispatching.

8 General Information

Questions concerning the public defence are made to the chair of the public defence or the main supervisor. Further questions can be made to the director of PhD studies.

There is no particular dress code.

9 Taking Effect

The instructions concerning tasks and the division of responsibilities in connection with defence of doctoral thesis at the University of Skövde take effect on the 8th of June 2020, and replace the instructions from the 13th of December 2016 (Registration number HS 2016/989).
Description of Public Defences and Licentiate Seminars at the University of Skövde

The public defence/licentiate seminar may be held in English or Swedish. The language shall be announced in advance. The language is decided with consideration for the author of the thesis, the external reviewer, and the members of the examining committee/the examiner.

The public defence/licentiate seminar progresses as follows:

1) The chair of the public defence/licentiate seminar welcomes everyone, introduces the author of the thesis and title, the external reviewer, as well as the members of the examining committee/the examiner. The chair introduces any relevant information about where the research has been carried out, and concerning other involved parties. Furthermore, the chair presents the procedures of the public defence/licentiate seminar.

2) The chair hands over to the author, who reports on any corrections of typos and/or other correction in the thesis (errata).

The content of the thesis is presented. This part normally takes 15 – 45 minutes, and follows one of two different structures:

   **Option 1:** The chair hands over to the external reviewer, who provides a summary and their own interpretation of the content of the thesis, and places it in relation to other research in the subject area. The author of the thesis is then given the opportunity to comment on the summary.

   **Option 2:** The chair hands over to the author of the thesis who presents the thesis and the scientific contributions it describes.

3) The external reviewer discusses the thesis with the author by asking questions and giving views, thus making it possible for the author to demonstrate their expected knowledge and ability to discuss the results. This is the central part of public defence/licentiate seminar, as the author’s ability to respond to the questions informs the grading. During this part of the public defence/licentiate seminar, other audience members may not participate in the discussion.

4) The chair gives the members of the examining committee/the examiner the opportunity to ask the author questions and comment on the thesis.

5) The chair gives the audience the opportunity to ask the author questions and comment on the thesis.

6) The chair thanks the participants, and declares the public defence/licentiate seminar closed.
7) The examining committee/examiner makes a decision (G/U) following a meeting with the external reviewer and the main supervisor – see outlined procedure below. Then, the result is announced.

The examination committee/examiner meeting takes place as follows:

1. The chair of the public defence/licentiate seminar hands over materials for the examination minutes and any other information to the examination committee/examiner before leaving the room.

2. The examining committee appoints a chair from among themselves.

3. The external reviewer is expected to participate in the deliberations. Supervisors are allowed to attend, and one of them (normally the main supervisor) must attend the meeting and participate in the deliberations. When the deliberations are deemed finished, the external reviewer and all supervisors are to leave the room.

4. The examining committee/examiner decides on a grade, completes and signs the examination minutes.

5. The examining committee/examiner announces its decision as soon as possible.

The chair of the public defence/licentiate seminar is responsible for the signed examination minutes from the meeting being handed to the University’s registry officer for registration and dispatching.