

Regulations for public defence of doctoral thesis in the disciplinary domain of Science

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Description:

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Regulations for public defence of doctoral thesis in the disciplinary domain of Science at Stockholm University

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A summary of these regulations is found on the last page of this document.

Higher Education Ordinance (HF)

The qualification descriptor for the Doctor of Philosophy and the Degree of Doctor states that a passing doctoral thesis, among other things, is required for these degrees. The doctoral thesis shall have been orally defended at a public defence. In the defence, there shall be an external reviewer, hereinafter referred to as the opponent (HF 6:33).

In the grading of the doctoral thesis, at least one person shall participate who is not active at the university at which the doctoral student is being examined (HF 6:34).

The university may pronounce regulations regarding the grading system that shall be used and about the defence and the grading otherwise (HF 6:35).

Local rules at Stockholm University

The President decides regarding the university's regulations for doctoral studies. The basic regulatory framework is found in the Higher Education Act (HL) and the Higher Education Ordinance (HF). The university's *Regulations for third-cycle education and examination* are found in their entirety at Staff/Organisation & Governance/Governing Documents - Rules and regulations/Education. Regulations relevant to a doctoral thesis defence in the disciplinary domain of Science are inserted in the regulations below. In addition to these, department-specific regulations may be added.



Regulations of the Science disciplinary domain

I. REVIEW PRIOR TO THE COMPLETION OF THE THESIS WORK

Assessment at the department level

When the thesis work approaches completion, the department shall organise a review of the thesis. The review should take place separately from the examining committee's work as it shall be independent in its assessment at the defence.¹ The review shall lead to a decision of whether a defence shall be recommended. The head of department or the person formally appointed by the dean as responsible for the third cycle education subject shall be notified of this decision. If a defence is not recommended, the head of department shall notify the doctoral student of this in writing. If the doctoral student chooses to proceed with the defence even though a defence is not recommended and the thesis is then failed, the doctoral student must cover the cost of printing the thesis and costs in connection with the defence, such as remuneration of the opponent, travel expenses for the members of the examining committee, etc.

II. OPPONENT, EXAMINING COMMITTEE AND OTHER ROLES

Opponent

The opponent should have qualification required for appointment as an associate professor or the equivalent, and may not be active at Stockholm University. If the appointed opponent is prevented from attending, a new opponent shall be appointed if time allows. If a sudden obstacle to attendance arises in connection with the time of the defence, the defence can be carried out over some kind of video conferencing or by one of the ordinary members of the examining committee being appointed the opponent, in which case the examining committee is to be supplemented with the backup member. If neither of these alternatives is possible, the defence is postponed to a later date.

Examining committee

A doctoral thesis shall be assessed with a grade of pass or fail. In the grading, consideration shall be taken to the content of the thesis and the public defence of the thesis. Grading for a doctoral thesis shall be decided by an examining committee, which is specially appointed for each thesis.

The examining committee shall normally consist of three members, all of whom should have qualification required for appointment as an associate professor or the equivalent and are independent of each other and should therefore be active in separate academic environments².

¹ SUHF recommendations for third-cycle education 2011-3

² Academic environment refers to a department, a part of a larger department or a close cooperation between parts of two or more departments or an equivalent grouping.



A backup member shall be appointed who shall be able to replace any of the ordinary members. Of these four, at least two shall have their activities located outside Stockholm University and no more than one may come from the same department as the respondent. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The examining committee's collective expertise shall be such that a careful academic examination of the thesis can be done. At least one member of the examining committee shall be familiar with the Swedish system for the defence of a doctoral thesis. The examining committee may be expanded to five members in the event of special reasons.

The examining committee meets privately in connection with the conclusion of the public defence and appoints a chairperson among its members. The opponent and one of the supervisors initially attend the meeting to answer questions, but may not attend the examining committee's private deliberations and decisions. The examining committee is a quorum when all members are present. The decision of the majority of the committee's members shall constitute a decision by the committee. A decision that is not unanimous and a decision for a failing grade shall always be motivated.

Retired opponent or examining committee members

Retired teachers and researchers may be appointed as opponents or members of examining committees. The individuals in question should conduct research. No more than one retired teacher or researcher should be appointed in the constellation opponent-examining committee for any given defence of a doctoral thesis.

Chairperson for the public defence

The defence is led by a chairperson. A teacher employed at the university who holds qualification required for appointment as an associate professor who is very familiar with the regulations and procedures surrounding the defence may be appointed as the chairperson for the defence. The chairperson shall not be on the examining committee.

Contact person for the opponent and examining committee members

The opponent and examining committee members shall have a named person to contact if they want to recommend that the defence is postponed before it has been officially announced. The chairperson for the defence or another permanent employee at the university may be appointed as the contact person for the opponent and examining committee.

Disqualification rules

Anyone appointed as the opponent, member of the examining committee, chairperson for the defence or the contact person may not have a conflict of interest relative to either the respondent or the supervisor. Any circumstance that harms the confidence in impartial action can be considered a disqualifying conflict of interest. The university's rule book describes legislation regarding rules on disqualification, as well as some examples. Examples of disqualification situations are also in the Swedish Research Council's guidelines for the handling of conflicts of interest.



Defence form - proposals to the Board of Science

A completed defence form with proposals on the opponent, examining committee, the chairperson for the defence and the contact person must be sent in to disputation@science.su.se by the head of department or by the person formally appointed as responsible for the third cycle education subject at least seven weeks before the defence, i.e. four weeks before the thesis publication.

The head of department's proposals shall have been received by the disciplinary domain board far enough in advance for the defence to be able to be held on the intended date even if the board finds it necessary to refer back the proposal, i.e. preferably 10 weeks before the defence.

The proposal shall clearly indicate

- that no known conflicts of interest exist between the respondent and opponent, examining committee members, chairperson for the defence or contact person
- that no known conflicts of interest exist between the supervisor and opponent, examining committee members, chairperson for the defence or contact person

The opponent and members of the examining committee should have qualification required for appointment as an associate professor. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The proposals must be motivated. A decision is made in accordance with the delegation of authority by the section dean or the section's vice chair.

The opponent's and examining committee's preparations

The department is responsible for the opponent and examining committee's members being informed well in advance of regulations and procedures in connection with the defence and that they are given access to a copy of the manuscript at least two weeks before the thesis is printed. This makes it possible for the opponent and examining committee members to recommend postponement of the defence before it has been officially announced. A recommendation to postpone is conveyed to the appointed contact person, who immediately contacts the supervisor and the head of department.

If the thesis is based on articles/manuscripts that have multiple authors, the doctoral student's own contribution to the thesis shall be presented to the opponent and examining committee members.



III. THE THESIS AND THE DEFENCE PROCESS

University-wide processes

University-wide procedures regarding the defence process are described in detail here:

<https://www.su.se/staff/researchers/dissertation-defence> (in English)

<https://www.su.se/medarbetare/studieadmin/disputationsprocess> (in Swedish)

Booking of time and room for the defence

The defence shall take place during the period 15 August – 15 June. Date and time for the defence are booked by the doctoral student with the Student Affairs Office. The department books a room for the defence. A defence in premises outside Stockholm University must be approved by the dean/pro-dean.

Publication of thesis - “spikning”

The doctoral thesis shall be published, electronically posted in the university’s publication database DiVA, no later than three weeks before the defence date. The period 16 June – 14 August shall not be included in the publication period, which is why for a defence on 24 August, for example, the thesis must be published no later than 5 June.

Presentation of the thesis

Doctoral theses and licentiate theses in Swedish shall have a summary in English and vice versa. The department is responsible for the thesis’ English summary being translated to Swedish in the thesis.

Materials from one’s own licentiate thesis may be used in the doctoral thesis if clear reference is made to the earlier work.

At the Faculty of Science, all doctoral theses shall be printed in at least 30 copies distributed as follows:

- 7 legal deposit copies that the printer is obliged to supply pursuant to the Swedish Act (SFS 1993:1392) on legal deposit copies of documents
- 5 copies to Stockholm University (the Stockholm University Library (3), the President (1), and the faculty (1))
- 8 copies to the department (archive copy (1), opponent (1), chairperson of the public defence (1), ordinary members of the examining committee (3), and backup members of the examining committee (2)),
- 10 copies to the department to be made available at the public defence.

The decision on the number of additional copies to be printed (e.g. that the respondent and supervisor have at their disposal) and how the cost of these is to be regulated rests with the head of department.



The delivery of printed copies to recipients pursuant to the first two points above (7 + 5 copies) is the responsibility of the printer. The department is responsible for the printed thesis being provided to the chairperson for the public defence, the opponent and the examining committee members no later than the publication date. The thesis is sent in a suitable form to departments at Swedish universities within whose area of activity the subject of the thesis falls.

More information

The Science disciplinary domain's form for the defence registration is available here:
<http://www.science.su.se/>

The Science disciplinary domain's instructions regarding the structure of PhD theses is available here:

<https://www.science.su.se/english/rules-regulations/guidelines-for-research-education/instructions-from-the-science-academic-area-regarding-the-structure-of-phd-theses-1.547827>

For questions regarding the Science disciplinary domain's defence form, contact disputation@science.su.se

Disclaimer: In the case of a discrepancy between the Swedish original and the English translation of this document, the Swedish version takes precedence.

SUMMARY

For the public defence of a doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Science, the following applies:

- Date and time for the defence are to be booked with the Student Affairs Office, <https://www.su.se/english/research/phd-studies/dissertation-defence>. The defence shall take place during the period 15 August – 15 June.
- The department books a room for the defence.
- A completed defence form with proposals on the opponent, examining committee, the chairperson for the defence and the contact person must be sent in to disputation@science.su.se by the head of department or by the person formally appointed as responsible for the third cycle education subject, 7-10 weeks before the defence, i.e. 4-7 weeks before the thesis publication.
- The opponent and members of the examining committee should have qualification required for appointment as an associate professor. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The proposals must be motivated.
- The examining committee shall consist of three members, who are independent of each other and should therefore come from different academic environments¹. A backup member must be appointed. Of these four, at least two shall have their activities located outside Stockholm University and no more than one may come from the same department as the respondent. The examining committee may be expanded to five members in the event of special reasons.
- The backup member shall be able to replace all members on the examining committee.
- The examining committee's collective expertise shall be such that a careful academic examination of the thesis can be done.
- At least one member of the examining committee shall be familiar with the Swedish system for the defence of a doctoral thesis.
- Retired teachers and researchers, who should conduct research, may be appointed as opponents or members of examining committees. No more than one retired teacher or researcher shall be appointed in the constellation external expert-examining committee.
- A teacher employed at the university with qualification required for appointment as an associate professor shall be appointed as the chairperson for the public defence. The chairperson shall not be on the examining committee.
- The chairperson for the defence or another permanent employee at the university may be appointed as the contact person for the opponent and examining committee.
- Anyone appointed as the opponent, member of the examining committee, chairperson for the defence or the contact person may not have a conflict of interest relative to either the respondent or the supervisor.
- Any circumstance that harms the confidence in impartial action can be considered a disqualifying conflict of interest. The university's rule book describes legislation regarding rules on disqualification, as well as some examples. Examples of disqualification situations are also in the Swedish Research Council's guidelines for the handling of conflicts of interest.
- The thesis shall be published in DiVA at least three weeks before the defence. The period 16 June - 14 August shall not be included in this announcement period.
- The department is responsible for the thesis being sent to the opponent and examining committee.
- For questions regarding the opponent, examining committee and chairperson for the defence, contact disputation@science.su.se

¹ Academic environment refers to a department, a part of a larger department or a close cooperation between parts of two or more departments or an equivalent grouping