

PhD thesis defences and Licentiate seminars – recommendations during the ongoing outbreak of the Coronavirus (new version).

Travel restrictions and other consequences of the ongoing virus outbreak now severely limit the possibilities for opponents and members of the committees to physically take part in defences of PhD and Licentiate theses. It is also the case that public gatherings should if possible be avoided in order to lessen the risks of spreading the virus. For this reason, the Faculty of Science would like to clarify the situation regarding PhD defences and Licentiate seminars, and what can be done:

- It can be considered if the defence should be postponed. It is not at all certain that the situation has improved in the autumn, but it is possible. However, if postponing the defence creates problems for the respondent this should be avoided, and it is the Faculty's position that our activities should proceed as usual when at all possible.
- Completely virtual PhD defences/Licentiate seminars (preferably via Zoom) are allowed for the time being, and may even be the preferable alternative in order to avoid public gatherings. In this case the defence must be made public via posting of the link to the virtual room on the department's home page, and spreading of the link via mail to other departments in similar subjects. It is possible to change to a virtual format also after the nailing date.

General principles:

- Opponents and committee members that cannot participate can be replaced through a decision by the Section Dean or Dean. This can be done on short notice.
- If a committee member is to be replaced it is often the best solution that the reserve becomes a member of the committee, and a new reserve is appointed.
- If the opponent is to be replaced it is often the best solution that one of the committee members becomes opponent, whereas the reserve becomes a member and a new reserve is appointed.

When the defence is partially virtual (i.e. there is also a physical room):

- Opponents and committee members that cannot participate physically can take part via link.
- In this case, these persons with functions in the defence who participates via link should be able to see and hear the respondent, presentations given in the auditorium and if at all possible everybody who is speaking in the physical room.
- Because of the current circumstances it is for the time being allowed that also the respondent takes part via link if necessary.
- Participants in the auditorium should if at all possible be able to see and hear all who participates via link.

When the defence is virtual or partially virtual:

- It is to be recommended that all with functions in the defence who participates via link leaves a phone number in advance so that they can be contacted by the chairperson in case of technical difficulties.
- It is to be recommended that there are potential reserves appointed for all who participates via link, so that they can replace them if the link fails. This can be done after a decision by the Dean if needed (i.e. when the composition of the new committee will not comply with the rules).
- Normally the Faculty appoints only one reserve, but under the current circumstances it is to be recommended that more potential reserves are appointed, that could on short notice replace others (having different scenarios for missing persons in mind). Such suggestions for extra reserves can be sent by e-mail to the appropriate Section Dean with cc to disputation@science.su.se in cases when the committee has

already been approved. Extra reserves can also be suggested and approved already when the form proposing the thesis committee is sent in (use the space for “Övriga upplysningar” for this purpose).

- The signature from committee members participating via link can be handled by the Chairperson for the public defence for instance by noting (writing) the names of the board members in the protocol and referring the signatures to e-mail. The committee members send an immediate confirmation by e-mail to the Chairperson. The e-mails are then saved and constitute a digital signature.

- The opponent must be able to take part of the respondent’s presentation and participate in the entire opposition. Committee members/examinator for licentiates must be able to take part in the whole defence. The audience must be able to pose questions at the end of the defence, for instance using the chat-function. If technique failure means that these demands cannot be met the chairperson should take the decision to redo/postpone the defence.

- It is the department that is responsible for arranging defences via link.

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