
EVALUATION AND PUBLIC DEFENCE - PRACTICAL PROCEDURES

The evaluation committee

It is the function of the Chairperson to co-ordinate the work of the committee and the Chairperson is normally associated with the candidate's department at the faculty.

On its appointment, each member of the examination committee will be sent a pdf version of the thesis and other documents relevant for the committee's work. The committee's Chairperson should then allocate tasks amongst the committee with respect to evaluation of the thesis.

The Chairperson presents a work timetable to the committee. A tentative defence date should be set as early as possible in the evaluation process. The date must be coordinated with the faculty, department, supervisors and candidate. Dates between December 20th – January 20th, and June 20th – August 20th should be avoided. The defence should preferably be scheduled for a Friday, due to the reservation of the faculty auditorium for this purpose.

When planning the defence, the committee shall allocate amongst its members the roles of 1st and 2nd opponent and inform the faculty of this.

We recommend that the Chairperson invites the committee to a meeting (for instance over dinner the day before the public examination) to make sure the procedures of the public examination are agreed upon by all members of the committee.

Trial lecture on a set topic

Between the trial lecture and the public examination we recommend that the committee gather for approval (or not) of the trial lecture. The result is announced at the public examination by the Dean.

Public examination

The (set) Dean of the Faculty opens the public examination.

The doctoral candidate starts with an introduction lasting for maximum 15 minutes, in which s/he offers a brief summary of the thesis, the aims and the methods employed. The first opponent should begin by a brief presentation of the committee's evaluation of the thesis, stating clearly why the thesis was found worthy of defence. Then s/he should provide an overview of the research area of the thesis, sketch the background to the work and the tradition of which it forms a part, and also present the main results of the thesis. This should take 15- 25 minutes and should form a basis for the subsequent discussion between the opponent and the candidate, which is the real core of the public examination.

At this point, it is the task of the opponent to ensure a discussion of the problems addressed by the thesis, its strong and weak points, etc., so that the candidate is enabled to provide more details about, and to defend, the contents of his or her thesis. It might follow that one considers the implications of the findings and conclusions.

A good public examination is characterised by a challenging dialogue that may well extend beyond the framework provided by the thesis itself and take up more general theoretical and methodological problems. The first opponent is thus expected to concern him/herself with the general principles involved in the thesis. This part of the examination usually takes a total of 1 – 1,5 hours.

The opponent may wish to conclude by thanking the candidate for the discussion and/or offering congratulations on a good defence, as appropriate.

Lunchbreak of about 20 - 30 minutes.

The second opponent begins after the break, concentrating on the more methodological aspects of the thesis, or on other aspects if such a division is agreed upon by the opponents.

The opponents should discuss the allocation of topics in advance, so that they are in agreement before they start to prepare their positions of opposition. Irrespective of any such agreement, the task of the first opponent is to describe how the thesis relates to the relevant research literature and set out the general framework of the public examination.

The purpose of the public examination itself is to test the candidate and his or her thesis in terms of accepted academic standards. The aim is to offer the candidate challenges to which they can make a constructive response, because when the public examination takes place the thesis is already presumed to satisfy the most basic requirements with regards to its quality. The opponents should remember that the principal role is allocated to the candidate and should therefore control their natural academic instinct to emphasise their own excellence.

The public examination should preferably not last for more than three hours.

An opportunity will be given to “oppose” the thesis *ex auditorio* on the indication of the Dean. However, the Dean should be informed in advance of such a wish, and an opportunity will be provided before the second opponent begins.

The examination normally ends with the candidate thanking the University for the opportunity of presenting him- or herself for the public examination.

The Dean brings the proceedings to a close.

The thesis, its defence and the trial lecture are finally evaluated, and the documents regarding approval of the trial lecture and approval of the public examination are signed by the members of the examination committee.

Other practical details

The opponents usually make their own travel arrangements and are reimbursed for their travel expenses after the defence. Hotel accommodation for the opponents is booked by the candidate's department.

The use of audio-visual presentations (such as power point presentations etc.) are strongly encouraged.

The Norwegian thesis defence is a public event. The audience will typically include the candidate's friends, relatives, and colleagues.

The Dean leads the procession into the auditorium, followed by the doctoral candidate, the Chairperson, second opponent, and first opponent. When the Dean has closed the examination, the same order is followed out of the room (Dean first).

Although there are no formal dress requirements, it is customary to dress in smart clothes for the defence (e.g., suit).

Immediately after the defence, the candidate's department will host a formal reception.

It is traditional for the candidate to invite the examination committee, the Dean, the Head of Department, friends, family, and colleagues to a dinner the evening of the defence.