



UPPSALA  
UNIVERSITET

Disciplinary Domain of  
Medicine and Pharmacy

## **Guidelines for the external reviewer (opponent), chair and examining committee at the defence ceremony**

### **Chair of the defence ceremony**

The defence ceremony is led by a chair. Note that the conflict of interest rules below also apply to the chair. The chair can be one of the members of the examining committee but could also be a person appointed solely for the purpose of serving as chair of the defence ceremony, in which case they should be an academically highly qualified person.

In the latter case, the chair may not participate in the examining committee's discussions or decisions. An examiner can chair a defence, but supervisors or other individuals with a direct connection to the author's thesis are not permitted to serve as chair.

The chair must be an employee, adjunct employee, emeritus, or otherwise affiliated with Uppsala University.

### **External reviewer (opponent)**

The external reviewer must be an academically highly qualified person, from another higher education institution, with requisite knowledge of the author's field of research. The external reviewer receives a fee of SEK 15,000. Payment of the fee is arranged by the department. Travel, accommodation and other expenses associated with the doctoral thesis defence are dealt with by the author's department.

It is inappropriate for the author of the thesis to have contact with the external reviewer before the defence. Contact between the supervisor and the external reviewer should be limited to practical issues.

When the external reviewer does not have a grading role at the defence, however, there is nothing to prevent the supervisor and the external reviewer having dinner together the evening before the defence, as long as the thesis is not discussed.

There is no impediment to inviting the external reviewer to the defence dinner/party, if one is planned.

### **Examining committee**

The examining committee decides on the grade awarded to a doctoral thesis and must be specially appointed for each individual thesis. The examining committee must consist of three or five members, most of whom must be taken from outside the department to which the doctoral student belongs. In cases where the committee consists of three members, a

reserve should be appointed. The members of the examining committee must represent different genders. A person who has been a supervisor of the doctoral student may not be on the committee.

Travel and costs directly related to the task of serving on the examining committee are dealt with by the author's department.

It is inappropriate for the supervisor and the author of the thesis to have contact with the examining committee before the defence, other than in practical matters.

It is inappropriate to invite the members of the examining committee to a dinner/party after the defence before the examining committee has completed its task.

No member of the examining committee is permitted to have any connection with the thesis project and all must have academic qualifications equivalent to docent status. The thesis defence application must include a brief justification for each proposed member of the examining committee. If the examining committee comprises three members, no more than one may come from the home department ('home department' refers to the department(s) at which the author of the thesis or any supervisor works) and there must be at least one external member from another higher education institution or organisation outside Uppsala University. If the examining committee comprises five members, no more than two may come from the home department and there must be at least one from another higher education institution or organisation outside Uppsala University.

Where there are five members, one member is permitted who does not fulfil the requirement of docent status, but the unique expertise any such member is bringing to the examining committee must then be specially explained.

The online application form allows notification to be given of an extra member, who is then checked by the Research Training Committee and, if necessary, can step in as a substitute at the defence. Note that the regulations concerning representation from another higher education institution must be met.

All theses must undergo an advance review, performed by the examining committee. The purpose of the advance review is to ensure that the papers included in the thesis are of sufficiently high academic quality and that the work performed is commensurate with the expected period of study. The Research Training Committee appoints one of the members as coordinator for the advance review.

A supervisor can propose a coordinator. The coordinator must not work at the same department as the author of the thesis or any of the supervisors.

When the Research Training Committee has decided on an advance review, the application to defend the doctoral thesis is sent to the examining committee together with the minutes template "Minutes of the examining committee's advance review" and instructions.

The coordinator summarises the result of the examining committee's advance review and signs (preferably electronically) in confirmation, after which the minutes are sent to the Research Training Committee. The examining committee has 10 working days to complete its advance review. *Note that it is the supervisor who has ultimate responsibility for ensuring that the advance review is submitted in time for a decision, but the Research Training Committee can assist in communications if requested.* When the Research Training Committee has received the minutes of the advance review, the application to defend the thesis can be taken up again for a possible decision to approve printing and publication ('posting'). This decision normally takes the form of a decision by the chair or, if the examining committee recommends against approving defence of the thesis, the decision is taken after discussion at the committee's next meeting.

If the decision is not to approve defence of the thesis, a new date for defence cannot be set less than three months from the date initially specified.

### **Conflict of interest rules concerning the chair, external reviewer and examining committee**

Apart from conflict of interest because of being an involved party, having a personal interest or because of kinship, the following applies.

A conflict of interest exists in the event of scholarly cooperation and joint production that has taken place during the last five years.

One joint article is sufficient to count as joint production.

A conflict of interest may exist even if more than five years have passed if close or extensive collaboration has occurred.

The relationship between a doctoral student and their supervisor is deemed to entail a conflict of interest no matter how long ago the collaboration occurred.

An exemption can be made from the five-year rule in the case of collaboration in the form of multi-centre studies and clinical treatment guidelines ('Guidelines'), assessed on a case-by-case basis. In this case, account is taken of the roles played by those involved. If they are jointly represented in a coordinating grouping or listed as the lead authors of the article, this is regarded as a joint publication.

Read more about conflict of interest rules at Uppsala University on the University's webpages on policies and regulations.

## Guidelines for the external reviewer and examining committee

The thesis may be the result of teamwork, but the personal, independent contribution of the doctoral student must be clearly distinguishable. The thesis may be a monograph or consist of several papers. Each included paper must be published or deemed publishable in a peer-reviewed journal.

The external reviewer and examining committee are to set forth the material failings and merits of the thesis at the defence. The following questions should be posed:

### 1. *Choice of subject and problems addressed*

- Is the subject chosen original? Why has it not been previously addressed (e.g. a new idea, necessary conditions were lacking in the past, the author of the thesis had access to unique material or an original technique, etc.)?
- If the subject has been addressed earlier, why did the author take it up again? Is there reason to suppose that previous results no longer hold because of developments in the area; do new methods allow a deeper analysis of the issues?

### 2. *Literature*

- Is the selection of references adequate and do the works referred to give a correct picture of the state of research in the field?
- Does the thesis contain a critical analysis of the referenced works?

### 3. *Material*

- Is the material studied appropriately chosen and sufficient in scope?

### 4. *Investigative and processing methods*

- Are the methods conventional, original, diverse, thoroughly checked for possible sources of error, and well suited to the issue addressed?

### 5. *Findings and conclusions*

- Are the results obtained of scientific interest and do they have any novelty?
- Are the author's conclusions logical and neither excessive nor inadequate given the findings and material?
- Does the author demonstrate scholarly stringency in the summarising discussion?

### 6. *Formal presentation*

- Is the thesis well organised?
- Is the linguistic expression appropriate and of acceptable quality?
- Are the experiments, analyses and results presented in a clear and comprehensible manner?
- Are the tables and figures well organised and explained?

### 7. *General summary*

- Does the author's contribution meet reasonable expectations of a four-year doctoral education in terms of scope and quality?
- If teamwork is involved, is it possible to distinguish the author's own contribution?
- What criticisms can be made of the thesis?
- What are the principal merits of the thesis (originality, scientific imagination, innovative methodology, novel findings, etc.)?