GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES ON RECOMMENDATIONS FOR AWARD OF THE PHD DEGREE

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Aarhus Graduate School of Business and Social Sciences
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Rules and regulations governing award of the PhD degree

The regulations governing the award of the PhD degree consist of

- Ministerial Order no. 18 of 14 January 2008 on the PhD programme at Danish universities (the PhD Order) by the Danish Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, the rules and regulations adopted by Aarhus University on
- PhD degree programmes and award of the PhD degree and the ruleset adopted by Aarhus Graduate School of Business and Social Sciences, in particular sections 6-9.

Requirements for the PhD thesis

In accordance with s. 11 of the PhD Order, the PhD thesis must substantiate the author's ability to apply the scientific methods of the field in question and must consolidate the author's research contribution to the field in question, and such contribution must correspond to international standards for PhD degrees awarded in the field.

In accordance with the general rules and regulations of Aarhus Graduate School of Business and Social Sciences, a PhD thesis may be in the form of either 1) a monograph or 2) a collection of scientific papers, including a summary and a conclusion accounting for the relation between the publications and their individual contribution to the total PhD project.

The monograph as well as the collection of papers must include contributions to research that either already has been or have the potential to be published in reputable academic journals. The size of the monograph or the collection of papers depends on the nature and quality of the contents. A monograph is typically 150-300 pages long, while a collection of papers usually will consist of three to six publications.

Part of the thesis may be written in collaboration with others (e.g. advisors), but the thesis must include completely independent work of major scientific importance. Co-authorship statements identifying the author's share of contribution must be included if the thesis contains co-authored papers or chapters.

The thesis may be written in Danish or English, and a brief summary in Danish and English must be included. The head of Aarhus Graduate School of Business and Social Sciences may permit the thesis, in part or in whole, to be written in another language than Danish or English.

The role of the assessment committee

The assessment committee must provide an impartial and qualified assessment of the submitted PhD thesis. The assessment committee must submit a recommendation in writing to the Academic Council, and the wording of such recommendation must present the committee's joint assessment. Both the preliminary and the final recommendation must be forwarded to the dean of the School of Business and Social Sciences through the head of the graduate school. The preliminary recommendation must state whether the submitted PhD thesis has been found to meet the quality requirements of the PhD Order (i.e. the submitted thesis is of satisfactory academic standard and found suitable for public defence) provided that a successful oral public defence is completed.
The recommendation must be motivated and may be determined by simple majority of votes in case of disagreement. If the recommendation is not unanimous, the minority and majority of votes should be listed and both should be motivated separately. The recommendation must be suitable to form the basis for the decision of the Academic Council on award of the PhD degree in accordance with the Danish PhD Order and the Danish Public Administration Act.

The duties of the assessment committee and the chairman

The committee members and the main supervisor are sworn to secrecy. The PhD student’s main supervisor assists the committee without voting rights. This implies that the chairman of the committee must ensure that the supervisor is involved in its work. How to do this must depend on the specific case. It is the chairman’s responsibility to clarify this with the supervisor in question and it is assumed that the supervisor participates in so far it may prove necessary. If the committee meets the supervisor should be invited. If the proceedings are in writing it should be ensured that that the members’ points of view should be known to the supervisor to a reasonable extent. In any case the committee’s draft to the written recommendation should be presented to the supervisor well before the deadline for the assessment and before it is sent to the head of the graduate school.

The written assessment and the final recommendation is the responsibility of the assessment committee alone.

All contact with the assessment committee should go through the chairman. The chairman must ensure that deadlines are met or extended, if necessary, and that any disputes relating to the work of the committee are settled.

In case of unanimous recommendations, i.e. unanimous acceptance or rejection of the PhD thesis as a basis for the award of the PhD degree, the chairman must adapt the individual contributions from the committee members to form one combined statement accounting for the committee’s joint motivations.

The preliminary recommendation

No later than two months after submission of the thesis, the assessment committee must forward a preliminary reasoned recommendation to the head of the Graduate School including one of the following conclusions:

1. In accordance with ministerial order section 18, subsection 2, the thesis is found suitable for public defence in the submitted version. The recommendation must include a defence date and a suggestion for a topic for the public defence.

2. In accordance with ministerial order section 18, subsection 2, the thesis is found suitable for public defence in the submitted form, but the assessment committee recommends certain improvements, which are assessed as feasible to implement before the specified defence date. The recommendation must include a specification of the recommended improvements, a defence date, and a suggestion for a topic for the public defence.
3. In accordance with ministerial order section 18, subsection 3 and subsection 4 No.2, the thesis is not found suitable for public defence in the submitted version, but the assessment committee finds that the thesis may be accepted for public defence after revision. The recommendation must include a deadline for submission of the revised thesis. The candidate and the principal supervisor are given the opportunity within a minimum of two weeks to put forward their comments to the recommendation.

4. In accordance with ministerial order section 18, subsection 3 and subsection 4 No. 1, the thesis is not found suitable for public defence in the submitted version, and revision within a reasonable period of time is not considered possible. The candidate and the principal supervisor are given the opportunity within a minimum of two weeks to put forward their comments to the recommendation.

The recommendation must be forwarded to the dean through the head of the graduate school for approval. The head of the graduate school must then forward a copy of the recommendation to the candidate.

If the recommendation states that the PhD thesis has not been found suitable for public defence, the dean must - on the basis of the recommendation drawn up by the assessment committee in combination with the author’s and the main advisor’s comments – reach one of the following settlements:

1. The oral defence cannot take place.

2. The PhD thesis must be resubmitted in a revised version within three months (or more). If the PhD thesis is to be resubmitted, such revised PhD thesis will be assessed by the same assessment committee, unless special conditions apply.

3. The PhD thesis will be assessed by a new assessment committee (second opinion).

**Pre-defence**

The preliminary assessment drawn up by the assessment committee may be based on the so-called pre-defence, where the PhD student is summoned for a meeting. This meeting must be organized by the chairman of the assessment committee, and such meeting must be held at such an early date that the preliminary assessment can be completed no later than two months after submission of the thesis.

The candidate, the advisors and the members of the assessment committee must participate in the pre-defence. In exceptional cases, one of the committee members may be absent. In such cases, the chairman of the assessment committee must present the viewpoints of the absent committee member. The pre-defence may take place in the form of a video conference.

The discussion at the pre-defence should be based on a first draft of the assessment committee’s preliminary assessment.

The discussion at the pre-defence should, as a minimum, concern all parts of the thesis in which the committee disagrees with the student and finds that the thesis should be improved.
Submission of revised PhD thesis

A revised PhD thesis must be submitted before the expiry of the deadline for re-submission set by the dean. A copy of the revised PhD thesis will then be forwarded to the members of the assessment committee.

The assessment committee must assess the quality of the improvements of the PhD thesis and must also determine whether the revised thesis is found suitable for public defence. If positive, the assessment committee must forward the revised preliminary assessment to the dean through the head of the graduate school together with a suggestion for a topic for the public defence.

If, on the other hand, the assessment committee finds that the thesis cannot be accepted for public defence, the dean must be informed of this through the head of the graduate school. The head of the graduate school must send a copy of the new recommendation to the candidate without delay.

The final recommendation

The public defence must take place no earlier than two weeks after the committee has released the preliminary recommendation, but no later than three months after submission of the thesis, unless special conditions apply. If the preliminary recommendation concludes that the PhD thesis must be improved, a new date for public defence must be set in consideration of the deadline for revision, which has been determined by the head of the graduate school. The public defence must be held immediately after expiry of the deadline.

Immediately after the oral defence, the members of the assessment committee must recommend whether the PhD degree be awarded, and such final recommendation must be reported to the dean and the author of the thesis.

The final recommendation drawn up by the assessment committee may be phrased, for example, in the following way:

"The School of Business and Social Sciences at Aarhus University appointed on [date] an assessment committee for assessment of a PhD thesis submitted by [academic degree, name] in order to obtain the PhD degree in [academic field]. The assessment committee consists of the following members:

[Job title, academic degree, name and place of employment]
Chairman of the assessment committee is [name].

(Additional information may be added; such as whether the PhD student has objected to the composition of the assessment committee, whether the assessment committee has approved modifications or supplementary material to the PhD thesis before the oral defence, etc.). The main advisor [job title, academic degree and name] has been a non-voting member of the assessment committee.

With reference to the committee’s enclosed assessment of the submitted PhD thesis entitled “[title of thesis]” authored by [name] and a successful oral defence on [date] on the topic “[title of talk]”, the undersigned members of this assessment committee shall recommend that [name] be awarded the PhD degree in (academic field)."
The final recommendation must consider both the quality of the PhD thesis and the public defence. The recommendation must be motivated and may be determined on the basis of majority of votes in case of disagreement. Any differences of opinion, including the reasons for such, must be stated in the recommendation. The assessment committee’s recommendation may be announced immediately after the oral defence, and the recommendation must promptly be forwarded in writing to the dean. If the oral defence provides new information (for instance if the author provides incorrect, missing or inadequate answers) that may alter the opinion of the assessment committee as to not awarding the PhD degree, this must appear from the final recommendation drawn up by the assessment committee.

If the final recommendation is negative, the Academic Council may decide to get a second opinion on the thesis by appointing a new assessment committee, provided that a second opinion is requested by the author (who must be allowed at least one week to consider taking such step) and the Academic Council finds such request to be valid.

The Academic Council may award the PhD degree if at least two members of the assessment committee recommend the award of the degree.

**Technical requirements to the recommendation**

Both the preliminary and the final recommendation must be prepared jointly by all members of the assessment committee. The recommendation may be signed by the chairman alone on behalf of the full committee when the committee members have agreed on the wording of the recommendation. The recommendation must be phrased in an unbiased and objective manner and must constitute a sufficient basis for the final decision.

A preliminary recommendation should generally not exceed 12 standard pages.

The recommendation must be addressed to the dean and must be forwarded through the chairman of the PhD programme committee to the PhD administration at the Office of Studies.

Aarhus Graduate School of Business and Social Sciences

Aarhus, March 2012