

GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT COMMITTEES ON AWARD OF THE PHD DEGREE

Aarhus BSS Graduate School
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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. 1039 of 27. august 2013 on the PhD Degree Programme at the Universities and Certain Higher Artistic Educational Institutions (the PhD Order):
<http://www.au.dk/en/about/organisation/index/6/64/64-01/>
- The rules and regulations of the University Act on the PhD degree programme and award of the PhD degree:
<https://www.retsinformation.dk/Forms/R0710.aspx?id=164209>
- The rules of Aarhus University about the PhD education:
<http://www.au.dk/om/organisation/regelsamling/6/64/2010-au8/>
- Rules and regulations for the PhD degree programme of Aarhus BSS Graduate School:
http://phd.au.dk/fileadmin/grads.au.dk/BSS/BSS_ph_d_retningslinjer_jun_2015_UK.pdf

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 scientific articles must include research contributions which have been published in or are potentially publishable through recognised publishing channels. The number of pages for both publication types depends on the nature and quality of the contents. The monograph is typically 150-300 pages, while a collection of scientific articles must generally consist of three to six papers.

Part of the thesis may be written in collaboration with others, e.g. supervisors, but must include entirely independent contributions of major scientific importance. If the thesis contains co-authored papers or chapters, co-authorship statements identifying the student's share of contribution must be included.

The thesis may be written in Danish or English, and a brief summary in Danish and English must be enclosed. The head of the Graduate School may permit submission of a thesis written, in part or in whole, in another language than Danish or English (Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 11.1).

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 for forming 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 (Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.2).

The duties of the assessment committee and the chairman

Members and delegates of the assessment committee have a duty to keep information confidential. The PhD students' main advisor should be regarded as a delegate to the committee but has no right to vote. This means that the chairman of the committee must ensure that the main advisor is involved in the committees' work. It is the chairman's responsibility to clarify this with the main advisor and it is understood that the main advisor participates to such an extent as circumstances may require. The main advisor should be invited to participate in committee meetings. If the committee's activity is written it must be done in a way that ensures that main advisor has reasonable insight into the members of the committee's points of view. The committee's draft for a written assessment must, under any circumstance, be presented to the main advisor well in advance before the deadline of submitting the assessment and before it is sent to the head of the Graduate School (Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.2).

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

(Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.3)

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 head of the graduate school must then forward a copy of the recommendation to the candidate.

If the preliminary assessment concludes that the thesis is not found suitable for public defence, the head of the Graduate School must, on the basis of the recommendation submitted by the assessment committee and the candidate's and the principal supervisor's comments (if any), make one of the following decisions:

- The public defence cannot take place.
- The PhD thesis may be re-submitted in a revised version within three (or more) months. If the PhD thesis is re-submitted, the revised version will be assessed by the same assessment committee unless special circumstances apply.
- The PhD thesis must be assessed by a new assessment committee.

Pre-defence

(Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.3)

The assessment committee's preliminary recommendation can be based on a so-called pre-defence, where the PhD student is summoned for a meeting. The meeting must be organized by the chairman of the field committee and must be completed early enough to ensure that the preliminary recommendation will be available no later than two months after submission of the PhD thesis.

The PhD student, the supervisors and the members of the assessment committee must all participate in the pre-defence. In exceptional cases, one of the committee members may be absent, and in such cases the chairman of the assessment committee must ensure that the views of the absent member are presented. If technically possible, the pre-defence may also take place as a video conference.

The discussion at the pre-defence must be based on an outline of the committee's preliminary recommendation, which must be forwarded to the PhD student and the principal supervisor no later than 48 hours prior to the scheduled time for pre-defence. The discussion must address all significant parts of the thesis which should be improved according to the assessment committee.

Submission of revised PhD thesis

(Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.5)

A revised PhD thesis must be submitted before the deadline for re-submission, which has been set by the head of the Graduate School. A copy of the revised PhD thesis must be forwarded to all members of the assessment committee through the head of the Graduate School.

The assessment committee will then make an assessment of the revised thesis and will determine whether the revised thesis can be accepted for public defence. If positive, the assessment committee must forward the final assessment to the dean, through head of the Graduate School, together with a suggestion for a topic and date for the public defence. If negative, the assessment committee must inform the dean, through the head of the Graduate School, that the revised thesis cannot be accepted for public defence. The head of the Graduate School must then as soon as possible send a copy of the new recommendation to the candidate.

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 (Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.6).

The assessment committee must in immediate continuation of the oral defence decide whether the PhD degree can be awarded and must inform Aarhus University and the author of the PhD thesis of such decision. The recommendation must include an assessment of the PhD thesis and of the public defence. The committee's final recommendation must be announced verbally immediately after the defence session and must be available in writing as soon as possible hereafter.

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 (Rules and regulations of the Graduate School, section 12.8).

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.

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