

Guidelines for the Commission Coordinator for Ph.D. assessments at VID Specialized University

Revised and approved by the Vice-Rector for Research, January 2024

The coordinator for assessment committees for the Ph.D. degree at VID Specialized University has an important role to fulfil and this guide is intended to assist with this work.

In addition, the coordinator must also refer to the following documents mentioned in the appointment letter:

- [Regulations for the Ph.D. degree at VID](#)
- [Guidelines and supplementary provisions for Ph.D. programs at VID](#)
- VID's ["Guide for commissions in the assessment of the Ph.D. degree at VID Specialized University"](#)
- [Guidance on the assessment of Norwegian doctoral degrees \(UHR\)](#)

Key tasks for the coordinator

The appointment of the commission takes place immediately after the Ph.D. candidate has submitted their thesis, in a letter from the Vice-Rector for Research or the Dean. After receiving the appointment letter, the coordinator contacts the other members of the committee to arrange an initial meeting (in person or digital) to plan the committee's work. The meeting should take place as soon as possible after the appointment. It is not necessary for the committee members to have read the thesis prior to this meeting.

First meeting

During the first meeting, the coordinator is responsible for the following:

- Familiarize the committee with the documents governing the committee's work (as per the appointment letter).
- Clarify possible dates for the defence (this is done in order to reserve rooms and technical support and is not related to the evaluation itself). The defence dates must be planned early to allow sufficient time between submission of the recommendation and the defence itself, normally 5 weeks. Should the committee request an extension on the submission of the recommendation, the time will be correspondingly shortened. Extensions are only granted in exceptional circumstances, and an application with justification must be addressed to the Vice-Rector or the Dean.
- Communicate proposed dates to the Ph.D. advisor listed as the contact person in the appointment letter.
- Clarify if opponents have the possibility to be physically present at the defence. Committee members located outside of Europe should generally participate digitally for environmental, economic, and time constraints reasons.
- Clarify that the task is understood, in light of the relevant documents. What should be emphasized in the assessment? For example, the committee should be informed that articles in an article-based thesis also contribute to the assessment, even if they are published in peer-reviewed journals.
- Present the program's academic profile. This is important as many external committee members may not be familiar with the program and may be more accustomed to, for example, mono-disciplinary Ph.D. degrees.

- Discuss roles within the committee. The internal member has both a coordinating role and is also expected to participate in the assessment of the thesis.
- Discuss the possible conclusions of the recommendation: approved, revision, or rejection (see the guide for assessment committees).
- Establish a clear schedule for completing the recommendation by the deadline given in the appointment letter.
- Assign tasks for the next meeting. It is expected that committee members will have read through the thesis and formed an initial opinion on the quality of the work by the next meeting.

Towards the final assessment

- The number of meetings required may vary. Typically, the committee holds two to four longer meetings in addition to exchanging evaluations digitally.
- Proposal for meeting structure;
 - Before the second meeting, all committee members should have read the thesis. At the meeting, an overall impression of the thesis is shared, and the quality of the work is assessed (is the thesis approved or not?). The committee agrees on further task distribution for the different sections of the report.
 - For the third meeting, external committee members deliver text which is compiled by the coordinator into the first draft of the report. The draft is reviewed by all.
 - During the fourth meeting, the recommendation is finalized. The topic for the trial lecture is determined.

Assessment committee's report:

- The coordinator summarizes the opponents' evaluations into a comprehensive assessment (the Recommendation). The coordinator may contribute their own evaluations in the text. It is important that the report follows the template provided and is comprehensive, coherent, and non-repetitive.
- It is desirable for the committee to reach a unanimous recommendation, but dissent within the committee is exceptionally possible. In such cases, it must be thoroughly justified and demonstrate that every effort has been made to reach a unanimous decision. It will then be a split recommendation. In the case of a split recommendation, the leader ensures that both majority and minority recommendations are presented.
- Allocate sufficient time before the deadline for the recommendation to allow all members to complete and approve the final draft.

Before the defence

- Explain to the opponents what will happen during the defence (this may vary between institutions).
- Determine who will be the first and second opponent.
- Provide the title of the trial lecture as described in the appointment letter to the Ph.D. advisor at the Center. The coordinator must ensure that the title of the trial lecture is formulated as short and concise as possible.
- Make committee members aware of the detailed schedule provided by the Center's Ph.D. advisor.
- Invite the committee members to dinner the evening before, if possible. The budget is max. kr 500,- per person.

- In case of illness of one of the opponents, the coordinator may be appointed as a substitute opponent during the defence. In such a case, request to receive questions from the original opponent.

During the defence

- Ensure that the committee arrive at VID in good time before the proceedings commence.
- Accompany (in consultation with the Ph.D. advisor) the committee to their own room where they can leave their belongings, etc.
- Ensure that any PowerPoint presentations are handed over to the technical staff in the defence room. Opponents cannot use their own computers.
- Escort the committee to the room where the trial lecture and defence will take place. Greet the candidate and supervisors.
- Follow the detailed schedule provided by the Ph.D. advisor. The trial lecture normally takes place from 10:15 to 11:00, and the defence usually begins with a procession at 12:15.
- Communicate the result of the trial lecture to the defence leader. If the trial lecture is not approved, the defence can proceed as planned, but the candidate will not be awarded. A new trial lecture is arranged with a new topic. The trial lecture must be very weak to be rejected.
- The committee eats lunch together with the defence leader and, in some cases, the candidate.
- Ensure that all committee members meet at 12:05 for the procession.

After the defence

- After the defence is concluded, the committee leaves the room to evaluate the defence. The defence leader asks everyone else in the room to stay. After a brief deliberation, the committee returns. The coordinator reads out the committee's conclusion (see separate proposal in "Guide for commissions in assessment...").
- Ensure that the committee signs the document for approval of the trial lecture and defence and hand it to the Ph.D. advisor.
- The committee, candidate, defence leader, and supervisors are photographed for a news item on vid.no.
- Attend any doctoral dinner and give a speech. Especially thank the committee for their collaboration and congratulate the candidate.