



GUIDELINES FOR ADJUDICATION COMMITTEES FOR PhD THESIS

Approved by the Vice-Rector for Research February 2021, revised November 2023, January 2025

A doctoral degree consists of the following three components: a doctoral thesis, a trial lecture and a public defence. In order for a candidate to be awarded a doctoral degree, the adjudication committee must find all three components to be satisfactory.¹

DOCTORAL THESIS

The adjudication committee appointed to assess the thesis shall submit its expert assessment of the thesis within the stipulated deadline. Section 15 of the [Regulations for the PhD degree at VID Specialized University](#) gives further details regarding the work of the adjudication committee.

The committee shall evaluate whether the thesis is of sufficient academic quality to count as a contribution to the research on the topic concerned. Academic disagreement between the committee members and the candidate can be addressed during the public defence.

Recommendation

The Committee report must be structured as follows,

- Formalities
- Assessment
- Summary
- Conclusion

It is the responsibility of the internal coordinator to ensure the correct format of the report.

¹ Should the public defence bring to light any new elements that give rise to uncertainty among the committee members and that cannot be verified during the public defence, the committee should clarify these matters and assess any possible consequences before submitting its final recommendation. If the main conclusions should thus prove to be untenable beyond doubt *in light of new elements that have emerged during the public defence*, the adjudication committee must recommend that the public defence be rejected. The same applies if reprehensible factors that are of material importance for the assessment of the work, such as violation of research ethics codes or breaches of good academic practices in general, come to light during the public defence.

Formalities:

- Candidate name and thesis title
- Thesis description: monography or a compilation of articles-based thesis, scope of the research, language
- Summary of the adjudication committee, names and titles, appointment, briefly summarise the committee's work

Assessment (up to 6 pages if the thesis is approved, up to 10 pages if it is assessed as not worthy of defence)

- Descriptive presentation of the thesis: Theme, scientific area, article-based/monograph, research questions, empirical work, scientific theoretical positioning, theoretical perspective, research findings, discussion and conclusions.
- For an article-based thesis: An assessment of each article (including those published in peer-reviewed journals)
- Assessment of the thesis. This should address the following:
 - Are the research questions sufficiently clearly and precisely formulated?
 - Are the research questions and any associated hypotheses productive in light of the research topic?
 - To what extent are the material and the choice of methodology relevant to answer the research question?
 - Has the candidate presented the project's profile and research in a scientific theoretical context?
 - Has the candidate considered research ethical aspects of their project in a satisfactory manner?
 - Are the conclusions grounded in the material presented, and do they satisfactorily answer the research question(s)?
 - Has the relevant literature been satisfactorily applied?
 - Does the thesis stand out as an independent and coherent academic work with a high academic standard?
 - Is the form of presentation, outline and the academic work in other respects satisfactory?
 - In the case of article-based theses, an assessment must also be made of the articles, even if they are published in peer-reviewed journals. The articles are included in the overall assessment.

Summary

The statement should provide an overall evaluation of the work, including due reference to the positive qualities of the thesis.

Conclusion

The statement should conclude with the committee's recommendation to 1) approve the thesis as worthy of defence, 2) allow for minor revisions to the thesis before a final recommendation is made or 3) reject the thesis as not worthy of a public defence.

The committee should preferably submit a unanimous recommendation. A dissident recommendation must be thoroughly substantiated and the committee must demonstrate that every effort has been made to reach a unanimous conclusion. In case of dissent, separate recommendations may be necessary.

The committee's report should normally not exceed 7 pages if the thesis is deemed worthy for public defence. The same applies where recommendation for minor revisions of the thesis is made. If the thesis is rejected for public defence, a more thorough reasoning is expected.

Revision or rejection

If the committee concludes that the thesis should not be approved in its present form, it can recommend minor revisions. The extension for minor revisions is up to six months. If minor revisions are recommended, the committee must provide a written specification of the scope of the required revision.

If the committee concludes that a comprehensive reworking of theory, hypotheses, materials and/or methods is required for the work to be approved, the committee should recommend that the thesis be rejected. This means that the candidate cannot submit a new thesis for adjudication until six months from the date when the assessment was received.

Clarifications and coordination of the committee's work

According to the Regulations for the PhD degree at VID, the committee is free to request supervisors to provide an account of the supervision and the work on the thesis (Section 15-1). Reference is also made to Section 15 of the Guidelines for the PhD degree from Universities Norway, which describes the work of the adjudication committee.

The time allocated for the assessment work is fixed (and is entered into the workplan of the internal committee member by the line manager).

The internal member of the committee acts as coordinator. The tasks involve:

- acting as a point of contact between the committee and the institution;
- ensuring that deadlines are met, that the recommendation meets the requirements for academic quality and that the external committee members are informed about the entire adjudication process;
- participating actively in the assessment of the thesis and selection of the topic for the trial lecture;
- coordinating the committee's recommendation and submitting the final recommendation to the institution.

There are separate guidelines for the coordinator role

The Chair of the Doctoral Committee will be available to the committee's coordinator for advice and guidance as needed.

TRIAL LECTURE

The candidate shall hold a trial lecture. The topic is proposed by the committee and approved by the Chair of the Doctoral Committee. The topic is announced to the candidate 10 working days before the date of the lecture. The topic is taken from the discipline encompassed by the candidate's thesis. The topic can be associated with areas that the committee wishes to have elucidated within the discipline concerned, or that it would have liked to see discussed in the thesis.

The given title for the trial lecture must be formulated as succinctly as possible. The title is published in advance of the public defence and should therefore provide clear direction of the content to a wider audience.

The objective of the trial lecture is to let the candidate document their ability to communicate research-based knowledge. In the assessment of the trial lecture, emphasis should be placed on both the academic content and the ability to communicate it. The committee evaluates the trial lecture as satisfactory or unsatisfactory.

PUBLIC DEFENCE

Normal practice in the Norwegian context is that when a thesis has been found worthy of public defence, it will also mean that its defence will be accepted for the doctoral degree.

The public defence is chaired by the Chair of the Doctoral Committee or another person who has been appointed by the Chair of the Doctoral Committee. The first and second opponent is appointed after consultation with the committee.² The first opponent starts the discussion, and the second opponent concludes the public defence. The opponents should have agreed beforehand what issues and topics each of them should raise.

The public defence is an academic discussion between the opponents and the doctoral candidate on the research question, the methodological and theoretical basis, the use of sources and the form of presentation in the thesis. Special emphasis should be given to testing the validity of key conclusions in the thesis. In their opposition, it is important that the opponents also emphasise the positive aspects of the thesis. As far as possible the exchange should be such that those who are unfamiliar with the discipline can also follow the discussion.

At the end of the public defence, the internal committee member (the coordinator) announces the committee's conclusion. If an approval is recommended, the announcement can contain the following:

Dear candidate (name) and head of the public defence. Ladies and gentlemen who have attended this public defence.

The committee has assessed the public defence and has concluded that it has been approved. Congratulations!

We congratulate NN (on his/her approved thesis and completed public defence).

We wish to thank NN, who in the company of the opponents (names) has shared important knowledge and insight into the topic of the thesis. (Could possibly be further specified in 1–2 sentences).

(Some concluding remarks, for example about expectations for the impact of the thesis in the field of research and practice, and the candidate's role in this regard.)

On behalf of the committee, we wish to thank you for the insight and new knowledge you have given us through the work you have done.

² The first opponent has 45-60 minutes at their disposal for the public defence, the second opponent has 45-60 minutes. The candidate introduces the thesis. Please refer to <https://www.vid.no/en/research/research-education-1/information-for-phd-students-final-phase/> for more information about the public defence.

If the committee concludes that the public defence cannot be approved, the following can be communicated:

The committee has assessed the public defence but has not been able to agree on the outcome. The committee will therefore need more time to reach a final decision. The college will be informed of the outcome as soon as a decision has been made.