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Translation of the official Swedish version. In cases of discrepancy between the English and Swedish versions the Swedish takes precedence.

# Rules for the public defence of a doctoral thesis



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## 1. Request for a defence of the thesis

A doctoral thesis is defended at a public defence act, where it is also made publicly available.

Before requesting the defence, the supervisor must contact an administrator at the Academic and Administration Support Office to pre-book the time of the thesis defence (forskningforskarniva@bth.se). Two public defences should not occur at the same time at the university. The defence should be carried out on one of BTH's two campuses.

At least 10 weeks before the thesis defence, the main supervisor shall discuss the proposals for opponent and examining committee members with the Dean of the Faculty.

The Dean of the Faculty determines the time and place for the defence, appoints the opponent and the examining committee and the chairman of the thesis defence. The main supervisor must request a defence in writing (the request is sent to the [registrator@bth.se](mailto:registrator@bth.se)).

### **The request shall contain the following information:**

- the name and title of the doctoral student;
- the name of the doctoral education subject;
- degree designation,
- title of the thesis,
- scope of the thesis (credits),
- date, time, venue for the public defence,
- proposal for chairman of the defence,
- suggestions for an opponent, brief CV or similar shall be attached to the request
- proposals for three (in exceptional cases five) members of the examining committee and one or more alternates, brief CV or similar shall be attached to the request;
- signature of the main supervisor, examiner and doctoral student,
- address of the website where the thesis, or a basically final manuscript thereof, is available in electronic form to the Deans.

The application must be submitted to the registrar no later than 8 weeks before the defence. The periods from Thursday closest to Midsummer – 15 August and 24 December – 6 January are not normally included in the Dean's review period.

No later than six weeks before the public defence, the Faculty Dean must, unless there are special reasons, have appointed the chairman, opponent and examining committee and set the time and place for the thesis defence. These decisions must be communicated immediately to those involved (supervisor, examiner, graduate student, chairman,

opponent and examining committee).

Dissertations should normally take place during term time (autumn or spring semester according to the Vice-Chancellor's decision) and on an appropriate date with respect to longer weekends and leave.

If there are special reasons, the Vice-Chancellor may decide that a public defence may take place outside the term.

## 2. Quality assurance of the thesis

The deans have overall responsibility for the quality of doctoral education at BTH. Part of the quality work is to ensure high quality of the doctoral theses presented and defended at BTH and having a routine for this is therefore important.

Quality assurance of doctoral theses before the defence takes place, in addition to the review by supervisors and possibly other colleagues and in addition to external review of articles included in the thesis, where appropriate, through a special ex ante evaluation in accordance with a routine set out in the annex to each subject's general study plan.

## 3. Design of the dissertation

The doctoral thesis is designed either as a coherent scientific work (monograph) or as a summary of scientific papers (compilation thesis) that the graduate student has authored alone or in common with other persons.

The thesis must include a loose sheet, so-called "spikblad" with a title, the author's name and institution, as well as an indication of where and when the thesis is to be defended, about the opponent, as well as a brief English-language reference ("abstract"). In addition, a popular science summary in Swedish must be written, which can be used as a basis for a press release.

The thesis must have a serial number and an ISBN number obtained from the University Library.

## 4. Reproduction and distribution of the dissertation

The doctoral student should contact the printing company that will reproduce the thesis well in advance of the thesis defence. Since the printing company may need up to one month for printing, the library should be contacted for this approx. 10 weeks before the

dissertation.<sup>1</sup>

At least three weeks before the thesis defence, the thesis must be available as both printed and digital copies. The three weeks should, as far as possible, not cover longer weekends and leave

The two copies shall be identical as far as possible<sup>2</sup>. This document shall correspond to what is established — no changes may be made to the document (for any changes thereafter, the errata list is used).

The thesis should be printed in at least 75 copies. A few copies are reserved for the libraries and the university library at BTH.<sup>3</sup>

The doctoral student is responsible for ensuring the mandatory distribution. Furthermore, 10 copies must be reserved for the examining committee, “spikning” and the like. The number of copies submitted to the department for distribution according to its own procedures may vary within BTH. However, the doctoral student always receives at least 25 copies for his or her own use.

The costs of printing the thesis are paid by the department. However, if the doctoral student wishes the thesis to be printed in an edition or in an execution that far exceeds normal at the department, the doctoral student may be ordered to pay part of the additional cost. In cases where necessary, the graduate student shall request permission from publishers to reproduce published articles in the thesis.

## 5. Costs of defence

All the costs of defence are borne by the department concerned. The estimated budget for the defence must have been approved by the Head of Department before the opponent and the examining committee are invited.

When booking travel and accommodation to the opponent and the examining committee, BTH's travel policy and representation policy must be followed. A balance should be made between travel and accommodation costs and the need to involve a specific opponent or examining board member.

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<sup>1</sup> See description of the printing process on the library's website:  
<https://www.bth.se/bibliotek/forskning/publicera-din-avhandling/>

<sup>2</sup> See guidelines for publication for researchers at Blekinge Institute of Technology

<sup>3</sup> See <https://www.bth.se/bibliotek/forskning/publicera-din-avhandling/>

## 6. Proclamation ("Spikning")

When the chairman of the defence, opponent and examining committee have been appointed and the time and place of the defence has been established, the doctoral thesis must be "spikad" no later than three weeks before the date of the defence and on an appropriate date with regard to longer weekends and leave.

During nailing, the thesis must be available (both in electronic form registered in DIVA and printed in sufficient numbers of copies to make it possible to carry out a satisfactory review of the thesis at the thesis defence). The aim is that the content of the thesis should be made known to academia and the general public and is done by publishing information about the time and place of the thesis defence, the report, the popular science summary and other appropriate information in electronic form in DIVA and the advertisement on the website where new dissertations are presented. Further information on procedures is obtained from the University Library.

The doctoral student's name, intended degree, doctoral education subject, title of the thesis in English and date, time and venue of the thesis defence should also be announced on the university's official notice boards.

## 7. Press release

The Communications Department at BTH is at the service of helping to write a press release for the seminar. The doctoral student is responsible for contacting the communications department ahead of time to prepare for this.

## 8. Opponent and examining committee

The doctoral thesis must be defended orally in a defence of the thesis in which there must be an opponent. The opponent must publicly discuss and examine at the thesis defence, while the examining committee must rate the doctoral thesis ("pass" or "fail").

The examining committee normally consists of three members. If the thesis is of such a nature that only three examining committee members cannot represent all the perspectives on the thesis that are reasonable to require, it may be decided that the examining committee shall have five members.

If an opponent or member of the examining committee is prevented from attending, a new opponent/member shall, if possible, be appointed by the Faculty Dean. If an emergency situation arises where the opponent is unable to attend, one of the members of the examining committee shall be appointed as an opponent, an alternate member of the

examining committee shall step in as a full member. Decisions should be made by the Dean/deputy-Dean of one of the faculties, but if this is not possible, the chairman of the defence act shall decide which of the members should proceed to act as an opponent. When proposing opponents and examining committee members, this situation should be taken into account.

### **Competence**

The opponent should be considered as a recognised expert, preferably in the subject area of the thesis, and have at least a doctorate degree. A majority of the members of the examining committee should have at least competence as associate professors.

If there are exceptional reasons, it may be acceptable that either the opponent or any member of the examining committee has not completed a doctoral degree. The supervisor must then supplement the application for a defence with a justification. The justification shall include a basis highlighting the individual's special competence. In the event that the opponent has not completed a PhD, the majority of the members of the examining committee should have competence as professors.

Internationally prominent researchers or an international representation should be sought for opponents and in the examining committee.

The examining committee shall include at least one person with good knowledge of the Swedish doctoral education, the examination and the learning outcomes for a Swedish doctoral degree.

BTH shall actively promote gender balance when appointing opponents and examining committee members, and if gender balance is not possible, both sexes shall be represented in the roles. If neither of these can be achieved, this shall be justified in the request.

### **Conflict of interest**

Any circumstance that undermines confidence in impartial conduct can be considered a conflict of interest. In order for the opponent and the examining committee to be impartial, the opponent and all full members must be external, i.e. unrelated to BTH. The connection to BTH is, for example, employment, board assignments, etc., and the withdrawal period, i.e. the period that has a past since the termination of the employment, is suitable 5 years. If there are special reasons, someone from BTH can be a full member of the examining committee, but then the deputy must be external so as not to risk a "BTH majority" in the examining committee.

Those who have been supervisors for the doctoral student or had the role of senior reviewer may not be included in the examining committee.

Several examining committee members for a thesis defence should not be recruited from the same higher education institution, and opponents should not come from the same higher education institution as any examining committee member.

A conflict of interest, between the opponent or a member of the examining committee and a supervisor, examiner or doctoral student, shall be avoided. Anyone who knows of a circumstance that is likely to constitute a conflict of interest against him or her should make this known. It is therefore important to indicate in the application for a defence all the facts that are relevant even if you do not consider that there is a conflict of interest.

Conflict is defined in these situations as:

1. Relationship supervisor, examiner or doctoral student.
2. Co-authors on joint articles over the past 5 years.<sup>4</sup>
3. Close cooperation in joint projects or project applications in the last 5 years<sup>4</sup>.
4. Expert opinion in an ongoing case written by a supervisor against an opponent or a member of the examining committee or vice versa.
5. Employment in a company that owns rights to research results in the thesis or has financed the research or where supervisors have a role as a partner, board member, etc.
6. Close relations or family.
7. Any other relationship in which impartiality can be questioned.

## 9. Thesis Defence Act

The Chairman decides on the order of the defence, which is normally as follows:

1. The thesis defence is opened by the Chairman explaining the order of the defence, after which the Chairman presents the doctoral student, the title of the thesis, the opponent and the members of the examining committee.
2. The floor is given to the doctoral student, who describes any corrections to printing errors or other corrections in the thesis.
3. The opponent or doctoral student makes a presentation of the thesis, including a description of how the thesis contributes to science and practice in the field.
4. A discussion begins where the opponent presents his or her questions and views on scientific relevance, methods and results and where the doctoral student orally

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<sup>4</sup> Intendr opponent or member i bboard against supervisors, examiners andch/or graduate student.



defends the dissertation against the opponent's questions.

5. The members of the examining committee then have the opportunity to ask questions to the doctoral student.
6. The floor is then opened up for questions, whereby the audience has the right to ask questions to the graduate student in the order decided by the chairman.

Provided that the opponent and members of the examining committee understand, the graduate student has the right to choose to speak in Swedish or English.

Before the defence, the chairman should have informed the opponent in detail about how the thesis defence will be carried out, and what requirements are required for the doctoral thesis in order to obtain the degree. This is especially important if the opponent is not familiar with the Swedish education system and the university's forms of defence.

## 10. Examining committee meeting

The examining committee normally meets immediately after the thesis defence and appoints a chairman within the group. The examining committee's task is to assess whether the doctoral thesis and its defence meet the requirements of the scientific society. The opponent and the main supervisor have the right to participate in the examining committee's deliberations, but not in the decisions. If the committee so decides, supervisors may also participate under the same conditions.

The committee shall have a quorum when all members or alternates thereof are present. Majority decisions apply and grades are only passed or rejected. In the case of an approved thesis, the individual members do not have the right to object to the decision. In the event of a failure of the thesis, the examining committee may justify its decision and the members have the opportunity to reserve their reservations. In this case, the main supervisor has the right to give a specific opinion.

Minutes shall be written from the committees meeting where the grade is given. The minutes shall be signed by all members of the examining committee and the main supervisor shall ensure that the original is sent to the registrar.

## 11. Diploma

Provided that the minutes of the examining committee meeting have reached the registrar and all other elements for the doctoral degree are completed, the doctoral student can apply for a degree certificate. The application is made on a special form, which can be obtained

from BTH's student portal.

## 12. Summary timetable

### **At least 10 weeks before the defence**

- The main supervisor will contact the Academic and Administration Support Office for preliminary booking of the planned defence date.
- The main supervisor discusses his proposals for opponents and examining committee members with the relevant dean.
- The main supervisor contacts the prospective opponent and examining committee members and develops a proposal for a date for the defence. In connection with this, the main supervisor sends out a conflict of interest declaration to the opponent and examining committee members.
- The doctoral student contacts the university library to determine the time for publication and printing.

### **At least 8 weeks before the public defence**

- The main supervisor sends the request for a defence to the registrar (digital request sufficient, provided signatures).

### **At least 6 weeks before**

- The faculty dean determines the place and time of the dissertation and appoints the examining committee and opponent as well as the chairman of the thesis defence.
- The Communications Department announces the thesis defence.

### **At least 3 weeks before**

- The doctoral student sends the thesis to the opponent and the members of the examining committee.
- The doctoral student "spikar" the thesis in DIVA.
- The doctoral student may instruct the communications department to design a press release, the Swedish popular science summary of the thesis and a short background if the doctoral student is to be attached.

### **After the dissertation**

- The principal supervisor shall ensure that the minutes of the examining committee meeting are sent to the registrar at BTH.
- The doctoral student applies for a degree certificate.