



Guidelines for examination in doctoral studies¹

These guidelines were ratified by the Faculty Board on March 4, 2020 and became valid on the same date.

Registration number HS 2023/692

¹ This is a translation of the Swedish version (Riktlinjer för examination inom utbildning på forskarnivå dnr HS 2020/244). In the event of any discrepancy, the Swedish version of this document, which is the official version, will be used.

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1 General information

A doctoral study is a form of individual education which is divided into a course section and a thesis section. In order to obtain a licentiate degree or a doctoral degree, the PhD student must pass both the course section and the thesis section. The parts making up the course section as well as the thesis section are specified in the “General syllabus.”

The course section includes courses and individual undertakings, i.e. other credit-bearing components in addition to courses (see Chapter 2). The thesis section includes the requirement to complete two or three mandatory seminars with a passing grade. This depends on whether the studies are for a licentiate degree or a doctoral degree (see Chapter 3).

Examination here refers to the examination of all components included in the doctoral studies, i.e. examination of courses and other credit-bearing components as well as the examination of the thesis and the defense in connection with a licentiate seminar or public defense of the doctoral thesis.

1.1 Thesis design

The thesis (the licentiate thesis as well as the doctoral thesis) must be designed in accordance with good scientific practice and in accordance with the subject’s general study plan. Instructions for thesis templates regarding content and graphic design at the University of Skövde (the University) must be followed.

The University's “Guidelines for scientific authorship” are to be applied when there are multiple authors of the publications/papers that are planned for inclusion in the thesis. It must be specified what the PhD student’s contributions are in each of these publications/papers that are intended to form a compilation thesis or the basis of a monograph. This must be done on a specific page in the thesis.

A thesis is normally written in English. The summary must always be available in both English and Swedish. The thesis must be proofread for language correctness.

1.2 Grades

According to the Higher Education Ordinance (Högskoleförordningen, HF), examinations that are included in doctoral studies are to be assessed according to the grading system used by the University (Chapter 6, Section 32 HF). At the University, courses and other examinations included in the doctoral studies as well as the examination of the thesis and public defense of a doctoral

thesis (licentiate seminar or defense of doctoral thesis) are assessed with either the grade “Pass” or “Fail” (P/F).

Grades on courses, other examinations, and the licentiate thesis and defense are decided on by a specially appointed examiner. Grades on a doctoral thesis and the defense are decided by a specially appointed examining committee.

1.3 Conflict of interest

During an examination in doctoral studies, national and local regulations on conflict of interest must be taken into special consideration (see the governing document “Guidelines on conflict of interest”). The conflict-of-interest regulations must be taken into consideration when appointing all functions included in the examination process, i.e. examiner of courses, previewer of the licentiate or doctoral thesis, chairperson of the public defense of the doctoral thesis, opponent at a licentiate seminar and public defense of doctoral thesis, examiner of a licentiate thesis, and member of examining committee for a doctoral thesis.

2 Examination of courses and credit transfer

2.1 The University’s own doctoral courses

Each course included in doctoral studies offered at the University must have an examiner appointed by the head of school. The competence, responsibility and tasks for examiners are specified in a special assignment description².

Examination is conducted in the way that is specified in the course syllabus. The course coordinator reports the grades directly in Ladok and the examiner certifies them.

2.2 Individual undertakings

An individual undertaking is some form of credit-bearing component that does not have a course syllabus. The main supervisor and PhD student agree together on the content and scope.

After having completed a component with a passing grade, the PhD student applies, in consultation with the main supervisor, to having the individual undertaking approved and recorded. The decision is made by the Director of PhD studies, who also certifies the component grade in Ladok after it has been reported in the system by the educational issues officer.

² Assignment description for examiner of course in doctoral studies.

2.3 Credit transfer

In their doctoral studies, PhD students are able to transfer credits from results in courses where the student was awarded a passing grade from other colleges or universities (from a Swedish or foreign higher education institution) or courses taken in another education cycle. Note that credit transfer cannot be made for courses included in the general entry requirements. Other merits that have been acquired in a different way, such as in a professional activity, may also be counted. In these cases, an assessment of the actual competence is made. A credit transfer of education or merits that have been acquired before admission into doctoral studies leads to the time for the doctoral studies being shortened to the equivalent extent.

For credit transfer in doctoral studies, the same rules apply as for first-cycle courses and second-cycle courses (Chapter 6, Sections 6–8 of the Higher Education Ordinance).

A PhD student can be given credits for courses and knowledge relevant to the PhD student's doctoral studies if this meets the knowledge requirements outlined in the general syllabus and is included in the PhD student's education according to the individual study plan. *Thus, all university credits that the PhD student can count must equal some credit-bearing educational component that is included in the PhD student's doctoral studies.* The PhD student is to consult with the main supervisor before an application for credit transfer is submitted.

2.3.1 Credit transfer of previous education or other merits

The dean makes the decision on credit transfer of education and merits that have been acquired before admission to the doctoral studies. An application should be submitted before the PhD student's first individual study plan (ISP) is drawn up. The director of PhD studies is the rapporteur. Credit transfers that have been decided on are accounted for in the PhD student's ISP.

2.3.2 Course taken at another higher education institution or another educational cycle

Concerning a doctoral course taken at another higher education institution as well as a course taken in another educational cycle, the PhD student is to apply for a credit transfer after consulting with the main supervisor. The decision on credit transfer and the number of credits is made by the director of PhD studies. If needed, the director of PhD studies may consult with the subject coordinator for the doctoral studies.

2.3.3 Appealing a decision on credit transfer

A decision on credit transfer can be appealed in writing within three weeks from the day the person received the decision. Instructions on how to appeal must be included in the decision on rejection.

3 Review of mandatory research seminars

During the doctoral studies, the PhD student is to present their thesis work in two or three mandatory open seminars. Which seminars that the student is to present will depend on the degree in question (for a licentiate degree there is no half-time seminar).

1. Planning seminar - research proposal
2. Half-time seminar - thesis proposal
3. Final seminar - thesis manuscript

For each seminar, the PhD student is to present a written report according to specific instructions (see Appendix 1). At each seminar, the written report is reviewed under the direction of a specially appointed reviewer. The reviewer assesses whether the report and presentation are of a sufficiently high quality. If not, a new report must be produced and a new seminar must be held. The reports from the first two seminars are filed, after the assessment has been approved, in the University's register together with the minutes from the respective seminars.

Note that an approved preliminary review in connection to the final seminar only means that the reviewer assesses the thesis manuscript to be of a sufficiently high quality. It is the main supervisor's responsibility to decide whether the thesis is of such quality that the PhD student can defend it publicly.

The PhD student can choose to present and defend their thesis despite being advised against it since the discussion during the final seminar is only advisory. If the PhD student wishes to defend their thesis or carry out the licentiate seminar despite being advised against it, the opponent and examiner/examining committee must be informed and a written statement from the main supervisor must be attached to the notification of the licentiate seminar/defense of the doctoral thesis.

The formats of the mandatory seminars are described in Appendix 1.

In the event that the PhD student chooses to do both a licentiate degree and a doctoral degree, a thesis manuscript is to be produced and a final seminar held for each thesis. If a licentiate thesis is written as a partial step towards a doctoral degree, it replaces the thesis proposal, and the licentiate seminar replaces the half-time seminar.

3.1 Requirements on reviewers of the mandatory seminars

The main supervisor is responsible for appointing and contacting the persons who will act as reviewers during the mandatory seminars. The reviewer, who must have subject competence within the relevant area for the degree, cannot be included in the PhD student's group of supervisors or be biased in any other way - see "Guidelines on conflict of interest."

3.1.1 Planning seminar

The reviewer must be a researcher who themselves has completed doctoral studies.

3.1.2 Half-time seminar

The reviewer must be an external, senior researcher who themselves has completed doctoral studies. In exceptional cases, the reviewer can be employed at the University; however, in this case they must work in a different school in order to avoid the risk of conflict of interest.

3.1.3 Final seminar

The reviewer must be an external senior researcher who themselves has completed doctoral studies. For the final seminar before the doctoral-degree examination, the reviewer must have at least the qualification required for appointment as a docent or the equivalent.

3.2 The supervisor's review and plagiarism check

To ensure the quality of the thesis, a plagiarism check must be carried out. The main supervisor is responsible for ensuring that reviews are continually made by both the formalities and the scientific content of the thesis. A plagiarism check is done once the manuscript is completed. Shortcomings, if any, must be rectified before the manuscript is submitted for preliminary review.

4 Examination of the thesis work

The written thesis must be defended at a public seminar (licentiate seminar respectively defense of doctoral thesis) - see Appendices 2 and 3.

The Faculty Board (or whom the board has delegated this to) is to decide the time and place for the defense of the doctoral thesis. This is to take place within an academic-year semester (spring or autumn) and during normal working hours. Consideration must be made for

dates for other public defenses of doctoral theses and academic ceremonies. Exemptions from the rules on time for public defense of a doctoral thesis can only be granted if there are special reasons.

The public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar must be announced well in advance according to an established time plan. At the time of the announcement, the thesis must be available at the University in a sufficient number of copies (see Appendix 2) in order to be available for a satisfactory review of the content in connection with the defense.

The public defense of doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar is led by a chairperson who is an active staff member at the school. A licentiate seminar is held in the same way as the defense of a doctoral thesis but with the following exceptions:

1. The examining committee is replaced by an external examiner
2. The examiner and opponent can be one and the same person

The Faculty Board (or whom the board has delegated this to) appoints all persons involved. The rules on conflict of interest must be taken into consideration when these persons are appointed (see Chapter 1.3).

Formalities regarding notification of a defense and proposals for examiners (the examining committee), opponent and other persons that may be involved - see Appendix 2.

4.1 Doctoral degree

4.1.1 Formal requirements for examining committee members, opponents, and defense chairperson

The examining committee is the examiner for the doctoral thesis and the PhD student's thesis defense during the public defense of the doctoral thesis.

The examining committee consists of three members. In addition, a substitute must be appointed, a person who is to be present during the public defense of the doctoral thesis and who can step in and become a member of the examining committee should one of the other regular members be unable to participate. Not more than one of the regular members of the examining committee can be an employee at the University unless there are exceptional reasons. At least one of the regular members must be from another Swedish higher education institute. Each member needs to have at least the qualification required for appointment as a docent or the equivalent. Both genders need to be represented in the examining committee unless there are exceptional reasons. These reasons must, in such cases, be stated in the notification of the public defense of the doctoral thesis. The requirements for the composition of the examining committee must,

to the greatest extent possible, be met even if the replacement steps in for a regular member.

The opponent must have at least the qualification required for appointment as a docent, or the equivalent, and cannot be an employee at the University.

Rules on conflict of interest must be taken into consideration during the appointment of the above-mentioned roles. The roles are described in Appendix 3.

4.1.2 Grades on a doctoral thesis

The grading of a doctoral thesis is made by the examining committee.

The examining committee's meeting takes place in connection with the public defense of the doctoral thesis, and the committee has a quorum once all of its members are present. A majority decision applies, and only the grades of pass or fail are awarded. When grading, the committee members must consider the content of the thesis as well as the presentation and discussion (defense) of the thesis.

If the examining committee awards the thesis the grade of pass, the reasons for this must not be presented in the examination minutes. The same applies if an individual member dissents from the decision. However, if the thesis is given the grade of fail, the reasons for this must be presented. The same applies if an individual member dissents from the decision. If the thesis is given the grade of fail, it is also possible for the main supervisor to submit a special statement.

4.2 Licentiate degree

4.2.1 Formal requirements for examiner and opponent

The examiner is the sole examiner for the licentiate thesis and the PhD student's defense of the thesis during the licentiate seminar.

The examiner needs to have at least the qualification required for appointment as a docent or the equivalent. However, if there are exceptional reasons, a person with a minimum requirement of doctoral degree may be appointed. The examiner cannot be an employee at the University.

The opponent must at least have a doctoral degree and cannot be an employee at the University. The opponent should be a senior researcher within the relevant subject area.

The role as opponent and examiner may be held by the same person.

Rules on conflict of interest must be taken into consideration during the appointment of the above-mentioned roles. The roles are described in Appendix 3.

4.2.2 Grade on a licentiate thesis

The grade on a licentiate thesis is decided by the appointed examiner.

A licentiate thesis must be awarded one of the grades pass or fail. When grading, one must consider the content of the thesis as well as the presentation and discussion (defense) during the licentiate seminar.

If the examiner awards the thesis the grade of pass, the reasons for this must not be presented in the examination minutes. However, if the thesis is given the grade of fail, the reasons for this must be presented. If the thesis is given the grade of fail, it is also possible for the main supervisor to submit a special statement.

5 Appendices

Appendix 1: Description of the forms of the mandatory seminars included in doctoral studies at the University of Skövde

Appendix 2: Instructions for the public defense of a doctoral thesis respectively a licentiate seminar at the University of Skövde

Appendix 3: Description of the public defense of a doctoral thesis respectively a licentiate seminar at the University of Skövde

6 Application of guidelines

These guidelines were applied on March 4, 2020 and replace the document with Registration number HS 2017/548).

Appendix 1: Description of the forms of the mandatory seminars included in doctoral studies at the University of Skövde

1) Planning seminar - research proposal

When the PhD student has completed one fourth of the studies, the student is to write a report on the intended line of research. The report is produced according to the University's template for licentiate and doctoral theses. The research proposal is to be presented and discussed in a public seminar. The research proposal must contain, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- problem formulation
- definition of aims and objectives
- background and significance of the research
- method and research plan
- expected results

The report and the presentation are to be reviewed by a specially appointed reviewer (see requirement specification in the guidelines). The main supervisor is responsible for appointing and giving the task to a reviewer.

The report is to be handed in (in electronic version) to all persons concerned no later than two weeks before the planned seminar. At the same time, the Curriculum Committee for PhD studies for the subject in question is informed of the planning seminar and the research proposal.

Besides the reviewer and the PhD student, all supervisors are to be present at the seminar and provide verbal comments.

The overall purpose of the seminar is to decide whether the line of research is relevant to the subject and whether the proposal is researchable and sufficiently described. Comments and decisions are documented by the reviewer according to the prescribed examination minutes. If the material is regarded as having substantial shortcomings, a new report must be produced and a new planning seminar must be held. All minutes as well as the approved report are filed in the University's register.

After the planning seminar has been held and approved, the main supervisor is responsible for the PhD student being moved up on the salary scale.

2) Half-time seminar - thesis proposal

When the PhD student has completed half the studies, the student is to write a longer report on the intended doctoral thesis. (Note that for a licentiate degree a half-time seminar is not held). The report is produced according to the University's template for licentiate and doctoral theses. The research proposal

is to be presented and discussed in a public seminar. The seminar is held once the thesis structure as well as essential parts of its content is planned and documented.

The research proposal must contain, but not necessarily be limited to, the following:

- research results achieved so far
- published material and planned manuscripts
- draft of the introductory parts of the thesis
- start of analysis
- plan for remaining work

The report and the presentation are to be reviewed by a specially appointed external reviewer (see requirement specification in the guidelines). The main supervisor is responsible for appointing an external reviewer and giving this task to that person as well as inviting other experts in relevant subject areas.

The report is to be submitted (in electronic version) to all persons concerned no later than three weeks before the planned seminar. At the same time, the Curriculum Committee for doctoral programmes for the subject in question is informed of the half-time seminar and the thesis proposal.

Besides the reviewer and the PhD student, all supervisors are to be present at the seminar and provide verbal comments.

The purpose of the seminar is to provide the PhD student with constructive comments on the achieved results and with recommendations on what remains to be done in order for the doctoral studies to be completed within the planned time frame. Comments and decisions are documented by the external reviewer according to the prescribed examination minutes. If the material is regarded as having substantial shortcomings, a new report must be produced and a new half-time seminar must be held. All minutes as well as the approved report are filed in the University's register.

After the half-time seminar has been held and has been awarded the grade of pass, the main supervisor is responsible for the PhD student being moved up on the salary scale.

3) Final seminar and thesis manuscript

No later than three months before the planned public defense of a doctoral thesis or a licentiate seminar, a preliminary and previewed version of the thesis is to be presented and discussed in a public final seminar.

The thesis manuscript and the presentation need to be reviewed by a specially appointed external reviewer (see requirement specification in the guidelines). The main supervisor is responsible for appointing and giving the task to an external reviewer.

The thesis manuscript is to be submitted (in electronic version) to all persons concerned no later than three weeks before the planned seminar. At the same

time, the Curriculum Committee for PhD studies for the subject in question is informed of the final seminar and thesis manuscript.

Besides the external reviewer and the PhD student, all supervisors are to be present at the seminar and provide verbal comments.

The external reviewer also needs to provide a written summary of the review regarding the thesis manuscript as well as the PhD student's presentation at the seminar. The summary must contain a recommendation for appropriate measures ahead of the intended public defense of doctoral thesis and be submitted to the main supervisor and the PhD student.

Comments and recommendations are documented according to the prescribed examination minutes and are filed in the University's register. If the material is regarded as having substantial shortcomings, a new final seminar must be held. The final discussion at the seminar is only advisory since the PhD student always has the right to present and defend their thesis. If the PhD student, despite being advised not to, wishes to publicly defend or carry out the licentiate seminar instead of carrying out a new final seminar, the opponent and the examining committee/examiner are to be informed and a written statement from the main supervisor must be attached to the notification of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar.

Appendix 2: Instructions for the public defense of a doctoral thesis respectively a licentiate seminar at the University of Skövde

1) Completed before the application

Required elements and other exams must have been awarded a passing grade and reported in Ladok. This is reported in connection with the notification of the public defense of a doctoral thesis or a licentiate seminar. An exemption from these requirements can only be granted if there are exceptional reasons.

To obtain their degree, the PhD student has to pass all courses included in the degree and have the course credits specified in the General syllabus for the subject in question.

2) Notification and selection of examining committee/examiner, opponent, and chairperson

A notification for a public defense of a doctoral thesis or a licentiate seminar with proposals for date and place as well as information about the thesis title, intended qualification and doctoral subject is to be submitted in writing by the main supervisor to the director of PhD studies no later than three months before the preliminary date of the licentiate seminar/public defense of doctoral thesis.

The notification must also contain proposals of persons for the different assigned roles as well as a motivation:

- examining committee members (public defense of the doctoral thesis)/examiner (licentiate seminar)
- opponent
- chairperson for the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar

Also submitted with the notification is:

- an updated individual study plan,
- a summary of the thesis content,
- a list of publications/papers included in the thesis,
- a presentation of the PhD student's contributions to the papers in the thesis (this also applies to monographs),
- a list of completed course credits (printed from Ladok),
- and, if applicable, a copy of an agreement on electronic publication.

The form for the notification can be found on the University's website.

The decision on the public defense of a doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar is made by the Faculty Board (or a person whom the board has delegated this to) and is submitted to the University's Registrar for registration and dispatching.

3) Announcement, printing, and dispatching of the thesis

No later than three weeks before the public defense of doctoral thesis, the place and time for the public defense of doctoral thesis, name of the PhD student, thesis title, thesis summary and name of the opponent must be made available on the University's website (in so-called "electronic nailing").

The thesis must be published in printed and electronic format. The electronic version is published in DiVA (Digital Scientific Archive). Copyrighted material may be exempted from electronic publication. Monographs are normally published in their entirety, while a publication of compilation theses can be limited to the introductory chapter, and the included papers are registered with bibliographic information and, if possible, also linked to the publisher's full-text versions.

The printed thesis should be dispatched, with here mentioned information, no later than three weeks before the public defense of doctoral thesis. The thesis is to be printed in a minimum of 70 copies. The school in which the public defense of doctoral thesis takes place will cover the cost of the printing and is responsible for the dispatching of the thesis according to current guidelines.

If the thesis is given the grade fail, the library must be contacted immediately to limit the distribution of the thesis through DiVA.

Appendix 3: Description of the public defense of a doctoral thesis respectively a licentiate seminar at the University of Skövde

The public defense of a doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar may be held in English or in Swedish. The language decided to be used must be announced in advance. The language is decided in consideration of the respondent, opponent and examining committee/examiner.

The public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar is carried out as follows:

1. The chairperson of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar welcomes everyone present and introduces the respondent, the thesis title, the opponent and the members of the examining committee/examiner. The chairperson presents all potentially relevant information about where the research has been conducted and presents other involved persons. Furthermore, the chairperson will present the order of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/seminar.
2. The chairperson invites the respondent to speak where they will point out corrections, if any, of print errors and/or other corrections in the thesis (errata).

The content of the thesis is presented. This part normally takes 15-45 minutes and is done in accordance with one out of two alternative approaches:

Alternative 1: The chairperson invites the opponent to speak. The opponent provides a summary and their own interpretation of the thesis content and also places it in the context of other research in the subject area. The respondent will then be given the opportunity to comment on the summary.

Alternative 2: The chairperson invites the respondent to speak. The respondent then presents the thesis and the scientific contributions it describes.

3. The opponent discusses the thesis with the respondent by asking questions and expressing their opinions thereby helping the respondent to demonstrate their expected knowledge and ability to discuss the results. This is the key part of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar since the respondent's ability to answer the questions is included in the grading. In this part of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar, other members of the audience are not allowed to participate in the discussion.
4. The chairperson lets the members of the examining committee/examiner ask the respondent questions.

5. The chairperson lets all members of the audience ask the respondent questions and comment on the thesis.
6. The chairperson thanks the participants and declares the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar completed.
7. The examining committee/examiner makes its decision (G/U=Pass or Fail) after a meeting with the opponent and main supervisor - see the description of the procedure below. Thereafter, the result is announced.

The meeting with the examining committee/examiner is carried out as follows:

1. The chairperson of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar starts the meeting by handing over the material for the examination minutes and other information, if any, to the members of the examining committee/examiner. Thereafter, the chairperson leaves the meeting.
2. The examining committee mutually makes a decision on who will act as chairperson during the meeting.
3. The opponent is expected to participate in the deliberations. The supervisors have the right to be present, and one of them (normally the main supervisor) *must* be present at the meeting and participate in the deliberations. When the deliberations are considered complete, the opponent and all supervisors must leave the room.
4. The examining committee/examiner makes its decision and fills out and signs the examination minutes.
5. The examining committee/examiner announces its decision at the earliest possible time.

The chairperson of the public defense of the doctoral thesis/licentiate seminar is responsible for submitting the minutes from the meeting with the examining committee/examiner to the University's Registrar for registration and dispatching.