

Public defence of a doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Science at Stockholm University

The public defence is an examination and a highlight to mark the end of four years of full-time study. In order to ensure that the review of the thesis and the public defence seminar is impartial, objective, and academically sound, the Board of Science has adopted the following regulations in addition to the regulations of the Higher Education Ordinance and the University.

Regulations concerning the public defence of a doctoral thesis at the Faculty of Science:

- The date and time of the public defence seminar should be booked by the doctoral student through Student Services, <http://www.su.se/forskning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/disputera-vid-universitetet>. The public defence seminar should take place between 15 August and 15 June. Exceptions may be granted for defence seminars outside this time period.
- The department will book a room for the public defence.
- A completed public defence form, including a proposed faculty examiner, examining committee, chair of the defence seminar, and contact person, should be sent to disputation@science.su.se by the head of department or a formally appointed "forskarutbildningsämnesansvarig" at least seven weeks prior to the public defence (i.e. four weeks before the date is announced).
- The faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee should hold the rank of docent or higher. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The proposals should be justified.
- The examining committee must comprise three members who are independent of each other. The members should thus come from different academic environments¹. One alternate member must be appointed. Out of these four members, at least two must work outside Stockholm University and no more than one may be from the doctoral student's department.
- The alternate member must be able to replace any member on the examining committee.
- The combined expertise of the examining committee must allow for a careful academic review of the thesis.
- The chair of the public defence must be employed at the University and hold the rank of docent or higher.
- The contact person for the faculty examiner and the examining committee may be the chair of the public defence or another teacher with indefinite-term employment at the department.
- There must be no conflict of interest between the respondent or supervisor and the faculty examiner, members of the examining committee, chair of the public defence, or contact person.
- Any circumstances that may put a person's impartiality in question can be considered a conflict of interest. The University's Rules & Regulations, Book 1, contain legal information concerning conflict-of-interest rules, as well as a few examples. Examples of situations where there is a conflict of interest can also be found in the Swedish Research Council's conflict-of-interest policy from 2014-04-10.
- The thesis must be registered in DiVA at least three weeks prior to the public defence. The period between 16 June and 14 August should not be included in the notification period.
- The department is responsible for sending the thesis to the faculty examiner and the examining committee.
- If you have any questions relating to the faculty examiner, examining committee, or chair of the public defence, please contact disputation@science.su.se

¹ Academic environment refers to a department, a section of a large department, or a close collaboration between sections of two or more departments or similar bodies.

Områdesnämnden för naturvetenskap



The Higher Education Ordinance (HF)

The qualification descriptors for doctoral degrees specify that an approved doctoral thesis is required in order to obtain such a degree. The doctoral thesis should be defended orally at a public defence seminar. A faculty examiner should be appointed for this seminar (HF 6:33).

At least one person involved in the grading of the doctoral thesis should not be affiliated with the higher education institution awarding the degree (HF 6:34).

The higher education institution may provide instructions concerning which grading system to use and other matters relating to the grading process (HF 6:35).

Local regulations at Stockholm University

The Vice-Chancellor determines the regulations for doctoral studies at Stockholm University. General regulations can be found in the Higher Education Act (HL) and the Higher Education Ordinance (HF). The University's full regulations can be found in Rules & Regulations, Book 2. Provisions relevant to the public defence of a doctoral thesis in the disciplinary domain of science are included in the regulations below.

Regulations at the Faculty of Science

I. INTERNAL REVIEW OF THE THESIS

Assessment at the department level

When work on the thesis is nearing completion, the department should arrange a review of the thesis. This review should be clearly separated from the examining committee's assessment in connection with the public defence.¹ The review should lead to a recommendation for or against scheduling a public defence. The recommendation should be made to the head of department or a "forskarutbildningsämnesansvarig" appointed by the dean. If a recommendation is made against scheduling a public defence, the head of department should notify the doctoral student in writing. If the doctoral student chooses to defend his/her thesis in spite of advice against it, and the thesis is rejected, the doctoral student has to personally cover the cost of printing the thesis and any other costs associated with the public defence, such as the honorarium to the faculty examiner, travel expenses for the members of the examining committee, etc.

¹ SUHF recommendations for doctoral studies 2011-3



II. FACULTY EXAMINER, EXAMINING COMMITTEE, AND OTHER ROLES

Faculty examiner

The faculty examiner should be a docent or professor (or equivalent), and should not be employed at Stockholm University. If the appointed faculty examiner is unable to attend, a new examiner should be appointed if time permits. If the faculty examiner is prevented from attending at the last minute, the defence may be conducted as a video conference of some variety, or by appointing one of the regular members of the examining committee as faculty examiner, in which case the alternate member will join the examining committee. If none of these options are possible, the defence will be postponed until a later date.

Examining committee

The doctoral thesis should be assessed using the grade Pass or Fail. Both the content and the public defence of the thesis should be taken into account when determining the grade. The grade should be determined by an examining committee, which is specifically appointed for each thesis.

The examining committee must comprise three members, all of whom should hold the rank of docent (or equivalent) and be independent of each other. The members should thus come from different academic environments². An alternate member who is able to replace any of the regular members must be appointed. Out of these four members, at least two must work outside Stockholm University and no more than one may be from the doctoral student's department. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The combined expertise of the examining committee must allow for a careful academic review of the doctoral thesis.

The examining committee should appoint a chair from within. The faculty examiner and one supervisor are entitled to attend meetings with the examining committee and take part in the deliberations, but not in the decisions. The examining committee can only make decisions when all members are present. The opinion agreed on by a majority of the members should serve as the committee's decision. Split decisions and decisions to reject the thesis must always be justified.

² Academic environment refers to a department, a part of a major department, or a close collaboration between parts of two or more departments or similar organisations.



Chair of the public defence

The public defence should be led by a chair. The chair of the public defence should be a docent or professor who is employed at the University and familiar with the regulations and procedures concerning the public defence of a doctoral thesis.

Contact person for the faculty examiner and members of the examining committee

The faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee should have a specific person to contact in case they wish to recommend that the public defence be postponed before it is officially announced. The contact person for the faculty examiner and the examining committee may be the chair of the public defence or another teacher with indefinite-term employment at the department.

Conflict-of-interest rules

There must be no conflict of interest between the respondent or supervisor and the faculty examiner, members of the examining committee, chair of the public defence, or contact person. Any circumstances that may put a person's impartiality in question can be considered a conflict of interest. The University's Rules & Regulations, Book 1, contain information about legislation concerning conflict-of-interest rules, as well as a few examples. Examples of situations where there is a conflict of interest can also be found in the Swedish Research Council's conflict-of-interest policy from 2014-04-10.

Public defence form - proposal to the Faculty Board

A completed public defence form, including a proposed faculty examiner, examining committee, chair of the defence seminar, and contact person, should be sent to disputation@science.su.se by the head of department or a formally appointed "forskarutbildningsämnesansvarig" at least seven weeks prior to the public defence (i.e. four weeks before the date is announced).

The proposal must be submitted to the Faculty Board early enough that the public defence can take place at the intended time even if the Board finds it necessary to refer the proposal back to the department.

It should be clear from the proposal that:

- there is no conflict of interest between the doctoral student and the faculty examiner, a member of the examining committee, the chair of the public defence, or the contact person;
- there is no conflict of interest between the supervisor and the faculty examiner, a member of the examining committee, the chair of the public defence, or the contact person.

The faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee should hold the rank of docent or higher. Both men and women should be represented on the examining committee. The proposals must be justified.



Preparations of the faculty examiner and examining committee

The department is responsible for informing the faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee in good time about the regulations and procedures relating to the public defence, as well as providing them with a copy of the manuscript at least two weeks before the thesis is printed. This will enable the faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee to recommend a postponement of the public defence before it is officially announced. A recommendation to postpone the public defence should be communicated to the appointed contact person, who will immediately contact the supervisor and the head of department.

If the thesis is based on articles/manuscripts with multiple authors, the doctoral student's own contributions to the thesis should be presented to the faculty examiner and the members of the examining committee.

III. THESIS AND PUBLIC DEFENCE

Booking a time and place for the public defence seminar

The public defence seminar should take place between 15 August and 15 June, at a time and place determined by the Vice-Chancellor. Under special circumstances, the Vice-Chancellor may grant special permission for a public defence to take place outside the semester. When granting such permission, the Vice-Chancellor may also allow for the doctoral thesis to be distributed outside the semester. The Vice-Chancellor has delegated the right to determine the time and place of the public defence; see the decision-making and delegation policy of Stockholm University ("Besluts- och delegationsordning för Stockholms universitet").

The date and time of the public defence seminar should be booked by the doctoral student through Student Services, <http://www.su.se/forskning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/disputera-vid-universitetet>. The department will book a room for the public defence.

Official announcement of the doctoral thesis ("spikning")

The doctoral thesis must be announced and registered electronically in the University's publication database, DiVA, no later than three weeks before the public defence. The period between 16 June and 14 August should not be included in the notification period, which means that if a public defence is scheduled to take place on 24 August, the thesis must be registered by 5 June.

The doctoral student must register the bibliographic details about the thesis in DiVA at least two weeks before the official announcement in order to receive the title sheet to be printed with the thesis in time. More information is available on the University Library website.

<http://www.sub.su.se/publicera/spika-avhandling.aspx>

Thesis production

Doctoral and licentiate theses in Swedish should have a summary in English, and vice versa. The department is responsible for ensuring that the English summary has been translated into Swedish in the thesis.



At the Faculty of Science, all doctoral theses should be printed in at least 71 copies: 3 to Student Services, 18 to the University Library, and at least 50 to the department. The head of department decides how many copies are required for the department in question. All these copies should include a title sheet (“spikblad”). In accordance with the *Legal Deposit Act*, the printing service is required to deliver an additional 7 legal deposit copies. The doctoral student may order additional copies at his/her own expense.

The doctoral student is responsible for ensuring that the thesis is delivered to Student Services (3 copies), the University Library (18 copies), and the department (at least 50 copies) before the announcement date, and for providing each supervisor with a copy of the thesis.

The department is responsible for providing the faculty examiner and each member of the examining committee with a copy of the thesis, as well as sending a copy to all relevant departments at other universities in Sweden.

Contract regarding thesis production and compensation of the faculty examiner and examining committee

A contract should be signed between the doctoral student and the department to regulate the financial side of thesis production. This is appropriate once the department has recommended that the thesis be submitted. The contract should include the following:

- a price quote for thesis production must be reviewed and approved by the head of department before the thesis is printed;
- a detailed summary of the costs (e.g. for printing, proofreading, translation, illustrations) to be covered by the department;
- any cost increases caused by the doctoral student should be covered by the doctoral student;
- how many copies of the thesis should be printed.

It is very important that the agreement with the printing service specifies that the thesis should be printed and delivered no later than 12 pm on the day before the official announcement. Earlier delivery may be advisable, so that the faculty examiner and examining committee will have their copies on the day of the announcement.

More information about procedures and agreements concerning the printing of doctoral theses are available here: <http://www.su.se/forskning/utbildning-p%C3%A5-forskarniv%C3%A5/disputera-vid-universitetet/4-tryck-av-doktorsavhandling-1.10165>

The department is responsible for compensating the doctoral student “with a reasonable amount” for any costs associated with the production and duplication of the thesis. This should always cover the cost of the copies printed in accordance with the Faculty Board’s decision regarding the minimum number of copies (71 copies), the *Legal Deposit Act* (7 copies), and the head of department’s decision regarding more than 50 copies for the department. In addition, the department is responsible for paying the faculty examiner and, where appropriate, the members of the examining committee. A prerequisite for compensation to be paid is that the department has recommended that the thesis be submitted. It is thus advisable to sign a contract (see above.)

**Additional information**

The electronic form for booking a date for the public defence, as well as more information about the printing and distribution of the doctoral thesis, are available here:

<http://www.su.se/forskning/utbildning-pa-forskarniva/disputera-vid-universitetet>

Information concerning registration of the thesis in DiVA is available here:

<http://www.sub.su.se/publicera/spika-avhandling.aspx>

Procedures and agreements concerning the printing of the doctoral thesis are available here:

<http://www.su.se/forskning/utbildning-p%C3%A5-forskarniv%C3%A5/disputera-vid-universitetet/4-tryck-av-doktorsavhandling-1.10165>

The Faculty of Science's public defence application form is available as a shortcut here:

<http://www.science.su.se/>

If you have any questions about the public defence application form, please contact

disputation@science.su.se

Disclaimer: In case of discrepancy between the Swedish original and the English translation of the regulations, the Swedish version takes precedence.