

Guidelines from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences for a doctoral thesis defence and the appointment of the examining committee and opponent

1 Background

Provisions for the degree of doctor and thesis defence are specified in Chapter 6 of the Higher Education Ordinance (1993:100) and in “Guidelines for teaching and examinations in third-cycle education” (LiU-2022-01125, decision date 2 May 2022).

The guidelines below specify the regulations that are valid for a doctoral thesis defence within the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at Linköping University (LiU).

2 Design and language of a doctoral thesis

A doctoral thesis is structured either as a unified work (a monograph) or as a compilation of scientific essays for which the PhD student has been sole author or authored together with other people (a compilation thesis). In the event of co-authorship, the contributions of the PhD student must be specified. A compilation thesis is to consist of all texts – as reprints if such have been published, otherwise as manuscripts – and, where relevant, a summary text (the introductory summary).

The doctoral thesis is to be written in Swedish, Danish, Norwegian, English, French or German. A thesis written in Swedish is to have a summary in English, and vice versa. If the thesis has been written in French, German, Danish or Norwegian, summaries in both Swedish and English must be given. A brief abstract in Swedish and English is to be submitted with the thesis, and this is also to be printed as a “posting notice” (“spikblad” in Swedish). The posting notice must also contain information about the opponent and the date and location of the thesis defence.

3 Registration of a doctoral thesis defence

The principal supervisor is to register the thesis defence with the Research Programmes Board at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences on a form designed for the purpose, in which suggestions are to be made for a faculty-appointed opponent, chair of the thesis defence, members of the examining committee (including substitute), and date of the thesis defence.

The faculty should receive the registration at least two weeks before the next meeting of the Research Programmes Board. There should be a period of at least two months between the Research Programmes Board processing the registration and the thesis defence.

4 Date and location of the public defence

The thesis defence should take place during normal Swedish office hours in term time, and on LiU premises. Exceptional reasons are required for the thesis defence to take place outside of term time. The chair, the opponent, the respondent and at least one of the members of the examining committee should normally attend on site. Other participants in the thesis defence may participate via video conference or equivalent means should this be deemed suitable. In special circumstances, the chair, the opponent, the respondent and all members of the examining committee may attend via video conference or equivalent means. Special circumstances may be, for example, such circumstances that make national or international travel impossible, or an opponent or examining committee member possessing unique knowledge wishing to participate remotely. Any claims for special circumstances as grounds for remote participation must be made and justified on the registration of thesis defence form.

Only one thesis defence may take place at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences at any one time.

The premises for the public defence are to be booked by the department. The administrative official assigned to the case in the dean's office is responsible for ensuring that the date and location of the thesis defence are announced on the university's official noticeboard at least three weeks in advance.

5 Criteria for appointment of the examining committee and opponent

A grade for a doctoral thesis is determined by an examining committee, specifically appointed for each thesis defence. When setting the grade, consideration is to be taken to both the contents of the thesis and the public defence.

An examining committee is to have three or five members. The principle applied at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences is that the majority of members of the examining committee are to be appointed from among teachers at other institutions of higher education or equivalent. Members of the examining committee must have qualified

as a docent¹, or possess a corresponding qualification from outside Sweden. Only in special circumstances can another person be appointed as a member of the examining committee. Any person who has been a supervisor for the PhD student may not be a member of the examining committee.

When appointing the members of an examining committee, one substitute is to be appointed who can take up the role in the event that a member of the examining committee cannot attend due to an unforeseen event. The substitute member may be employed at LiU. If it is the case that one of the ordinary members of the examining committee is employed at LiU, however, the ordinary member and the substitute member may not be employed at the same department.

The members of the examining committee are to be drawn from different genders. Only in special circumstances can an examining committee that comprises solely one gender be appointed.

The opponent must be qualified as a *docent* or possess corresponding scholarly expertise and may not be active at LiU. An opponent from outside of Sweden is to have corresponding scholarly expertise.

When appointing the opponent and examining committee, including the substitute, the regulations relating to conflicts of interest must be observed, more details of which are given below.

Based on the proposals made by the principal supervisor on the registration of thesis defence form, the Research Programmes Board at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, having had the task delegated to it by the Faculty Board, will determine the appointment of members of the examining committee (including a substitute), the opponent, chair of the thesis defence, and date of the thesis defence. Any requests for non-compliance, where relevant, with the fundamental criteria for members of the examining committee, the substitute, and opponent must be fully justified by the principal supervisor and be stated on the registration of thesis defence form.

6 Regulations relating to conflicts of interest for the doctoral thesis defence

In order to ensure that the examination at a thesis defence takes place with legal certainty and in an impartial manner, it is extremely important that the opponent

¹ Internationally, titles that approximately indicate a similar level of competence include “associate professor”, “reader” and “senior lecturer” (English), “habilité à diriger des recherches” (French.) and “Doctor habilitatus (Dr. habil.)” (German).

and examining committee are appointed in such a way that no suspicion of conflict of interests can arise. This is a fundamental consideration for the credibility and legitimacy of the university, the supervisors, the opponent, the examining committee and the candidate. Even there is no conflict of interests as defined by the Administrative Procedure Act, it would be unfortunate – not least for the candidate – if a focus comes to fall on the possible impartiality of those involved, rather than on the quality of the thesis.

The opponent or a member of the examining committee will be deemed to be subject to a conflict of interests if they:

- have participated actively in the supervision of the research student
- have co-authored any publications with the research student
- have co-authored any publications with the supervisor during the past five years.²
- have had any other close professional collaboration with the supervisors or the research student
- are in a position of dependence to the supervisor or the research student
- have an obvious relationship (in friendship or enmity) with the supervisor or the research student.

7 Publication and distribution of a doctoral thesis

Doctoral theses at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences are to be published in the publication series “Linköping Studies in Arts and Sciences”. Each department will provide more detailed information about department-specific publication series, where relevant.

Unless provisions of copyright or other circumstances prevent it, theses from the Faculty of Arts and Sciences are also to be published electronically through Linköping University Electronic Press.

A thesis must be reviewed before the thesis defence, for instance in a seminar. This review also includes a check for plagiarism. The result is reviewed by the supervisor together with the doctoral student as part of completing the thesis.

Before a doctoral thesis is published in the publication series at the faculty, Linköping Studies in Arts and Sciences, the PhD student should contact the university library to obtain the following:

² An exception may be made if it is obvious that the co-authorship has not involved close collaboration, such as publication in a large anthology with many independent authors.

- An ISBN and ISSN. In cases where the thesis is published by an external publisher, the latter is to provide an ISBN. The library must be informed of this number.
- a serial number for the Linköping Studies in Arts and Sciences
- a brief faculty text (in Swedish or English), which is to be printed on the back cover.

Well before the completion of the thesis, the PhD student should contact the library to discuss strategies for disseminating information about the thesis and other matters.

A minimum of 70 copies of doctoral theses at the Faculty of Arts and Sciences are to be printed. These copies are to be distributed as specified below.

At least three term-time weeks before the defence, the doctoral thesis must be distributed as follows:

- ten copies to the university library. If not published electronically, 40 copies of the thesis must be delivered. The library will issue a digital receipt for the delivery, which is sent to the registrar.
- the number of copies specified by the PhD student's department must be delivered to the department. These are intended for internal distribution and for distribution to departments at other institutions of higher education in Sweden. The department is responsible for this distribution. The department will issue a digital receipt for the delivery, which is sent to the registrar.
- two copies to the dean's office. A receipt is not issued for these copies.
- remaining copies of the thesis are to be shared between the department and the PhD student, with the PhD student receiving at least 30 copies.

The funds allocated by the Faculty Board of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences to each research environment cover printing costs and other costs for the thesis defence such as remuneration to the opponent and travel costs for the opponent and examining committee.

8 "Posting" a doctoral thesis ("Spikning")

The public announcement of a doctoral thesis (known as "posting", or "spikning" in Swedish) is to take place at least three weeks before the date of the thesis defence. The posting is to be preceded by confirmation by the dean that the notification may be posted. These three weeks should fall within term time.

The posting takes place by physically nailing the doctoral thesis to a noticeboard designated for this purpose. In connection with this, the thesis is also registered

electronically in the university's publication database. The dean may grant a shortened time between the posting and the defence in special circumstances.

A more detailed description of the posting process will be supplied by the dean's office.

9 Meeting of the examining committee

After the thesis defence, the examining committee is to meet to determine the grade awarded for the doctoral thesis. The opponent and supervisor have the right of presence at the meeting. The opponent or supervisor may not, however, participate in determining the decision of the examining committee.

The examining committee is to select its chair from among the members. The examining committee is quorate when all members are present. If the members of the examining committee cannot reach a unanimous decision, the majority decision is to prevail. Reasons for a decision to award a fail grade must be given.

A report of the thesis defence is to contain information about the members of the examining committee, the chair, and the person who participated as opponent. All members of the examining committee are to sign the decision. If the thesis is given a pass grade, the committee's decision need only contain this information. If, in contrast, the thesis is given a fail grade, the reasons for this must be stated.

10 Grade awarded

The doctoral thesis is to be awarded a grade of Pass or Fail. When determining the grade, the contents of the thesis and the defence made by the student are to be taken into consideration.

A thesis that has been authored by two or more people working together may be approved as a doctoral thesis if it is possible to distinguish between the contributions of the authors.