

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OPPONENT OF DOCTORAL THESIS

INSTRUCTIONS FOR OFFICIAL OPPONENT'S STATEMENT

The opponent's statement consists of an evaluation of the thesis and its public defence. The statement constitutes the final basis for the Faculty's decision on approving or rejecting the thesis. Thus, it is important that the opponent clearly states:

1) any defects of the thesis, 2) the merits of the thesis, 3) a clear stance on whether the thesis should be approved or not.

The opponent's statement may be free form, but it can include the same points that are mentioned in the instructions concerning examiners' statements ([a link](#)), where applicable. Additionally, the opponent's statement should include a brief description and evaluation of the public defence of the thesis and any contributions of the other participants at the public defence.

The opponent's statement should ideally end with a summary commenting the originality of the research subject and clearly stating whether the topic is relevant, is handled in a way that meets scientific criteria and whether the thesis, in general, is original and comprehensive. Attention should be paid to whether the research verifies previously obtained results, complements previously made but unconnected and uncertain observations or includes new and essential information in the field of study. Special mention should be made of whether the thesis includes observations and conclusions that are crucially important to the field of research in question.

In an opponent's assessment of a doctoral thesis, the following points merit special attention:

1. An evaluation of the topic of the thesis, including consideration of the number of problems which have had to be solved. The significance of the conclusions should be reflected upon with the following criteria in mind: To what extent are new ideas or insights provided? How have the problems presented in the thesis been solved? What is the quality of the doctoral researcher's observations?
2. An evaluation of how original the planning and the execution of the research have been.
3. An evaluation of the quality of the doctoral researcher's achievements. This evaluation may rest on the level of care with which the achievements have been reached, on the level of difficulty of the methods used, on the development of new methods (if any) and on the applicability of the results for further research.
4. An evaluation of the doctoral researcher's mastery of the field of research and the researcher's familiarity with pertinent literature.
5. An evaluation of the structuring of the thesis, the manner of presentation therein and the style and use of language.

If the opponent so wishes, the statement may indicate that the thesis should be accepted with distinction. The basis of distinction should be included in the statement. For thesis of exceptionally high quality, distinction may be awarded based on the recommendations of examiners and the opponent.

In addition to their free-form written statement, the opponent is asked to complete and submit an appendix form (suggested grade) to the opponent's statement. A link to the appendix form has been sent with the invitation email.

PROCEDURE AT A PUBLIC DEFENCE OF A DOCTORAL THESIS

1. When the participants of the thesis enter the room, the defending doctoral researcher enters first, followed by the custos (chairperson). The opponent enters last.
2. The correct form of attire for all participants is black dress with long sleeves for ladies and tail coat for gentlemen (or, where appropriate, uniforms without decorations). Alternatively, if the doctoral researcher, custos and opponent so agree, formal suits may be worn. Where appropriate, participants may wear a doctor's gown (with or without the relevant headdress). Participants holding Nordic doctorates are to carry their doctor's hat in their hand while entering and leaving the room; during the thesis the hat is placed on the table with the lyre facing the audience.
3. When all are seated, the custos opens the proceedings with the following words: "As custos appointed by the Faculty of..., I open this doctoral thesis." The doctoral researcher remains standing.
4. The doctoral researcher delivers the *lectio praecursoria* (the introductory lecture) standing. The *lectio* begins with the greeting: "Learned custos, my esteemed opponent, ladies and gentlemen...". The *lectio* may not exceed 20 minutes.
5. Correction of misprints is not part of the proceedings at the thesis. The doctoral researcher may provide the opponent with a written list of errors which the researcher has identified, and this list may be appended to the opponent's statement submitted to the Faculty.
6. On concluding the *lectio praecursoria* the doctoral researcher addresses the opponent with the following words: "Professor (or Doctor, etc.) NN, I respectfully ask you, as the opponent duly appointed by the Faculty of... for my thesis, to present any criticism you may have against my doctoral thesis."
7. The opponent stands (as does the doctoral researcher) and delivers a short statement on the scientific status and significance of the topic of the thesis, together with other similar comments of a more general nature. After this statement, both opponent and doctoral researcher are seated.
8. When examining the thesis, the opponent should begin by dealing with general and methodological questions, and then proceed to a detailed scrutiny of the text.
9. Examination usually takes 2–3 hours. If the examination is lengthy, the custos may announce an interval. The thesis may not last longer than six hours in total.
10. When the opponent's examination of the thesis is over, the opponent stands and delivers a final statement, during which the doctoral researcher also stands.
11. The doctoral researcher remains standing and expresses their gratitude to the opponent for the discussion.
12. Next, the doctoral researcher turns to the audience, and invites contributions as follows: "I now respectfully invite anyone in the audience who wishes to offer criticism against my thesis to ask the custos for permission to speak".

13. The custos may then grant permission for the audience to speak, and is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral researcher can reply immediately to each question, and that the discussion does not stray from the matter at hand.

14. Finally, the custos stands up and ends the proceeding with the words: "This thesis is now concluded"