

Rules regarding the public defence of doctoral theses for the Degree of Doctor at the Faculty of Human Sciences

These rules regarding the public defence of doctoral theses for the Degree of Doctor at the Faculty of Human Sciences were adopted by the Council for third-cycle programmes on 4 October 2005 and approved by the Faculty board on 29 November 2005.

The Higher Education Ordinance stipulates that doctoral students shall present and defend their theses in public. According to the formal requirements, the author of the thesis, the external reviewer, the chairperson of the public defence and all members of the examining committee must be present for the entire public defence. Since the defence of the doctoral thesis is public, anybody, internal or external to the university, has the right to attend and ask the author questions.

A public defence of a doctoral thesis usually lasts for about two hours and has roughly the following format.

- The chairperson welcomes the examining committee, the external reviewer, the author of the thesis and the audience. The title of the thesis is stated, after which the chairperson presents the members of the examining committee, the external reviewer and the author of the thesis. There is a brief description of how the public defence will proceed, during which all members of the audience should be informed that they will have the opportunity to ask the author questions once the external reviewer has completed their examination.
- The chairperson then gives the author of the thesis the opportunity to make any corrections, orally or in writing.
- After that the chairperson hands over to the external reviewer to summarise the thesis and place it in a wider context. Once that has been done, the external reviewer can ask the author of the thesis whether the summary gives an accurate picture of the contents of the thesis.
- The external reviewer then proceeds with the actual examination of the thesis which should mainly consist of a dialogue between the external reviewer and the author. The external reviewer asks questions about the thesis and the author answers and discusses what the external reviewer has said. The examination can be concluded with a summary opinion from the external reviewer.
- Thereafter, the chairperson invites the examining committee, followed by the other members of the audience, to ask the author questions.
- Once there are no more questions remaining, the chairperson announces that the public defence is over and that the examining committee will meet immediately.
- The examining committee meets and notifies participants of the decision as soon as the meeting ends.