

## Completing a doctoral dissertation at Turku School of Economics (TSE)

Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme of Turku School of Economics

### 1. General principles

- A doctoral dissertation at TSE must demonstrate the doctoral researcher's deep understanding of the research topic and ability to produce new scientific knowledge independently.
- The work is carried out under the guidance of two or more supervisors. At least one supervisor is typically a professor in the doctoral researcher's major discipline.
- The doctoral dissertation may be either a monograph or a compilation thesis.

### 2. Compilation thesis

A compilation thesis comprises a set of interrelated studies preceded by a synthesis. It must deal with one coherent scientific problem or a set of interrelated problems.

A compilation thesis consists of:

- A synthesis written by the doctoral researcher that motivates the thesis and positions it in a particular research area, formulates the research problem and objectives both of the thesis as a whole and of the interrelated studies, specifies the role of the individual studies in the thesis, justifies the data and methods employed, and outlines the results and contribution of the studies and the thesis as a whole.
- Three to five scientific *studies* that must form a coherent whole and address interrelated research questions, the number being less significant than the scientific contribution made by the thesis as a whole. A study may be a published scientific article, an article manuscript approved for publication, a chapter in a book or conference volume, a publication in, for example, a series of a university or research institute, or an unpublished article manuscript intended for publication. Parts of a previously published doctoral thesis cannot be included in another thesis by the same author.

Joint research results can be included in a compilation thesis if the candidate has contributed independently to their production. The candidate's role in the research must be demonstrated in a written statement signed by the co-author(s). The statement shall be addressed to the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme of Turku School of Economics on requesting the assignment of preliminary examiners, to whom it will then be forwarded. A doctoral thesis is evaluated as the candidate's individual accomplishment and, hence, the candidate's own overall accomplishment must meet the requirements set for a doctoral thesis.

The candidate must obtain written permission from the respective publishers in order to print published articles in a doctoral thesis.

### 3. Preliminary examination

Once the supervisors agree that the manuscript is ready, the doctoral researcher submits their manuscript to the faculty. After a hearing of the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme, the Director of the Doctoral Programme appoints at least two preliminary examiners, based on the proposal of either the supervisor or a professor in the doctoral researcher's major subject.

The preliminary examiners must be external to the University of Turku. In exceptional cases, the second pre-examiner may come from another faculty of the University of Turku, but the opponent must come outside of the University of Turku. Both of the preliminary examiners must have a doctoral degree and one of them must also have, at the minimum, the title of docent or other equivalent competence.

The preliminary examiners cannot be disqualified or have a controversial relationship to the dissertation research - for example they must not have co-authored publications together with the author of the doctoral thesis, they must come from outside the University of Turku and they must not have close and recent (as the main rule, from the past three years) scientific collaboration with the supervisor(s).

#### ***Instructions for preliminary examiners***

- Preliminary examiners are asked to deliver a substantiated, written statement (approximately 1200–1600 words) evaluating the scientific contribution of the manuscript, indicating its strengths and weaknesses. The statement shall consider the research problem, theoretical framework, methods and data, the findings and validity, discussion, and conclusions. And finally, the composition and representation of the manuscript, as well as the quality of the argumentation.
- For a compilation thesis, the statement shall also consider whether the studies in question form a coherent whole. If any of the studies is co-authored, the statement shall consider the sufficiency of the candidate's independent contribution.
- The pre-examination statement must conclude with an unconditional recommendation indicating that the manuscript meets the requirements set for a doctoral thesis and in consequence can be granted a printing permit. This means the examiners do not have decisive requirements for revisions before printing permission is granted. The Director of the Doctoral Programme grants permission to print on the basis of the preliminary examiners' statements. If a preliminary examiner requires changes to the manuscript, the administrative procedure shall halt until the changes have been made and said examiner states that the manuscript warrants permission to print.

Preliminary examiners can draw up individual statements or a joint statement, which shall be provided within two months of receipt of the manuscript. The *signed* statement(s) will be delivered to the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme to the following email address: [tse-asiakirjat@utu.fi](mailto:tse-asiakirjat@utu.fi) (TSE Registry).

#### 4. Public Examination

After a hearing of the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme of Turku School of Economics, the Director of the Doctoral Programme appoints one or two opponents to the public examination, based on the proposal of either the supervising professor or a professor in the candidate's major subject. The Director at the same time appoints a Grading Committee for the grading of the thesis. Members of the Committee are the opponent(s), the preliminary examiner(s) and the supervisor(s).

The Doctoral Researcher shall submit a written response on the significant changes made to the thesis after the preliminary examination. The statement, the final thesis and also the preliminary examiners' statements are delivered to the members of the Grading Committee by the secretary of the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme

The opponent must have, at the minimum, the title of docent or other equivalent competence. The opponent cannot be disqualified or have a controversial relationship to the dissertation research - for example they must not have co-authored publications together with the author of the doctoral thesis, they must come from outside the University of Turku and they must not have close and recent (as the main rule, from the past three years) scientific collaboration with the supervisor(s).

The supervisor(s) together with a TSE office assistant handles the practical arrangements relating to an opponent's visit to Turku School of Economics.

The dress code for the doctoral researcher, the opponent(s) and the Custos (the Chair of the examination) is a long sleeved black dress for women, and evening dress for men. The convention may be dark suit if the candidate, Custos and opponent(s) so agree.

#### **Official procedure at the public examination of a doctoral thesis**

1. In processional order, the doctoral candidate enters the room first, followed by the Custos and then the opponent(s). The audience shall stand.
2. The Custos and opponent(s) shall hold their doctoral hat (if awarded) in the left hand on entering and leaving the room. During the public examination, hats are placed on the table with the lyre toward the audience.
3. Once all including the audience are seated, the Custos, standing, opens the proceedings with the following words: "As Custos appointed by the Director of the Doctoral Programme of Turku School of Economics, I declare that this public examination has begun."
4. The candidate, standing, then delivers their *lectio praecursoria* (introductory lecture), which shall not exceed 20 minutes. The lecture begins with the salutation: "Learned Custos, my esteemed opponent(s), ladies and gentlemen."
5. The candidate concludes the *lectio praecursoria* with the following words: "Professor N.N., I respectfully ask you, as the opponent duly appointed by the Director of the Doctoral Programme, to present your comments on my doctoral thesis."
6. The opponent(s), standing, will then deliver a short statement concerning the scientific status and significance of the topic of the thesis, together with any other

comments of a more general nature. Following this statement, both the opponent(s) and candidate resume their seats.

7. In the examination of the thesis, the opponent(s) shall begin by addressing general questions and then proceed to a detailed scrutiny of the text. The examination will cover the research problem, its motivation and scientific positioning, research objectives, theories, methods and data employed, results, conclusions, and scientific contribution. The correction of misprints is not addressed in the proceedings. The candidate may give the opponent(s) a written list of identified misprints; this may be appended to the opponent(s)' final statement.
8. The opponent(s) shall spend no longer than four hours on the examination, leaving sufficient time for other speakers to present questions or comments. If the examination is lengthy, the Custos might announce an interval. The examination shall not exceed six hours in total; typically, its duration is 2–3 hours.
9. The opponent(s) will conclude the examination with closing remarks and a final statement on the thesis, including general comments on its strengths, weaknesses and contribution to its field. The opponent(s) and the candidate stand. Following the final statement, the opponent(s) resumes their seat.
10. The candidate, standing, then thanks the opponent(s) for the discussion.
11. The candidate next turns to the audience and says: "I now respectfully invite any members of the audience who wish to offer comments on my thesis to ask the Custos for permission to speak." The candidate then sits.
12. The Custos then leads the discussion, and is responsible for ensuring that the candidate is able to reply to each question or comment, and that the discussion is relevant to the topic.
13. Finally, standing, the Custos concludes proceedings with the following words: "The public examination of the doctoral thesis is now concluded." The opponent(s), candidate and audience shall be seated.
14. After the public examination, with the audience standing, the opponent(s), Custos and candidate leave the room in that order, followed by the audience.

## **5. Opponent's final statement and instructions for the grading committee**

The Grading Committee will discuss the grading of the thesis, usually right after the public examination. Arrangements for the discussion are handled by the custos. The discussion should be organised as a face-to-face meeting or online video call/meeting. Discussion by email is possible yet not encouraged as it makes the dialogue between the members more challenging.

Although the supervisor(s) take part in the Grading Committee discussion and provide potentially necessary background information for the Committee, the opponent(s) propose a grade for the thesis and submits a final written statement using TSE's official Opponent Statement Form independently. The thesis is graded with either Approved or Approved with Distinction.

The opponent(s) shall have two weeks from the date of the public examination to deliver the filled-out opponent's form (approximately 1200–1600 words) including a substantiated evaluation of the scientific value of the final doctoral thesis. Also, the statement shall

include an evaluation of how the candidate succeeded in defending the thesis. Based on these arguments, the opponent(s) shall propose a grade for the doctoral thesis (Approved with Distinction / Approved). The statement shall include information on hearing the Grading Committee. If more than one opponent was invited, they can deliver individual statements or a joint statement.

The Grading Committee shall be notified by the secretary of the steering committee of the grade suggested in the opponent's final statement. If the suggested grade is Approved with Distinction, the preliminary examiner must as soon as possible respond to the notification and inform whether they agree/disagree with *the grade Distinction* (not the content of the statement per se). In the case the preliminary examiner(s) disagree they shall have 14 days from the date of being notified to deliver a written statement on their opinion to the Council of Turku School of Economics. The statement shall be delivered to the following email address: [tse-asiakirjat@utu.fi](mailto:tse-asiakirjat@utu.fi) (TSE Registry).

After hearing the Steering Committee of the Doctoral Programme of TSE, the Director of the Doctoral Programme of TSE grade the doctoral thesis on the basis of the opponent's final statement and possible statement(s) from the member(s) of the Grading Committee.

## 6. Grading criteria

### Approved with Distinction:

- The dissertation demonstrates extraordinary scientific quality beyond standard expectations. The dissertation makes a highly significant and novel contribution that substantially advances scientific knowledge in its field. The researcher has demonstrated a high level of independence by contributing original ideas and solutions to the research problem.
- The research has resulted in, or is highly likely to result in, one or more publications (article or book chapter) in top-tier or highly respected, refereed scientific journals or books.
- The dissertation and/or its publications are expected to be widely cited in its field and/or show high potential for practical application or policy impact. The impact can also be reflected through presentations at highly respected international conferences or industry meetings.
- The dissertation demonstrates high methodological rigour in applying empirical or theoretical scientific methods. It may also contribute by applying and/or developing a novel or less-used method in the subject area.
- The dissertation is presented exceptionally well, and the language and referencing are of high academic standard.

While there is no strict quota, this grade is intended for clearly exceptional top ~10% of the dissertations that meet the criteria.

### Approved:

The dissertation meets the criteria for a doctoral thesis and demonstrates scientific competence and contribution.

### Fail:

The thesis does not meet even the minimum academic standards, due to serious flaws in methodology, contribution, coherence, and/or defence performance.