

Guidelines for Opponents and Members of the Grading Committee

Based on The Faculty's [Post Graduate Study Guide](#) (Faculty Council 8 June 2022, updated 10 May 2023)

After granting permission to defend the dissertation, the Dean appoints the Opponent (or Opponents), the Custos and the Grading Committee for the public examination of the dissertation.

The public defence of a doctoral dissertation – The actors

The Opponent should, if possible, be an adjunct professor (docent) or have equivalent qualifications. The Opponent must come from outside the University of Turku. If there is more than one Opponent, at least one of them must come from outside the University of Turku. The Opponent submits a statement to the Faculty concerning the scientific value of the dissertation (Please see below 'The grading of the doctoral dissertation')

The Custos opens and concludes the public examination and presides over it. The Custos informs the Opponent(s) about the practices and progression of the public examination at the University of Turku. The Custos also acts as a host to the Opponent(s) while they are visiting the university.

The members of the grading committee include the Opponent(s) and 1-2 expert members appointed by the faculty. At least one of the expert members must be an adjunct professor (docent) employed by the University of Turku and representing a related discipline
Also, pre-examiner of the dissertation or a representative of related disciplines from other universities can be named as an expert member of the Grading Committee.

The expert member who is an employee of the University of Turku introduces the Opponent(s) and the other members of the Grading Committee to the Faculty's grading practices, grading scale and other regulations, and acts as the chair and secretary of the Grading Committee that gathers after the public examination.

After the public defence of the dissertation, the grading committee has a meeting where they discuss about the grading of the dissertation. All members of the Grading Committee must be present at the defence and the committee meeting.

The Grading Committee delivers a statement form to the Faculty. (Please see below 'The grading of the doctoral dissertation').

The grading of the doctoral dissertation

The dissertation is approved and the decision upon the grade is made by the Dean or the Faculty Council based on the Opponent's (or Opponents') and the Grading Committee's statements.

Doctoral dissertations are graded on a scale Fail, Pass, Pass with Distinction. As a rule, dissertations are approved with the grade Pass. Only when a doctoral dissertation is of exceptionally high academic quality and merit it may be graded with Pass with Distinction.

The Opponent submits a statement to the Faculty concerning the scientific value of the dissertation within one month after the public examination of the dissertation. If there have been more than one Opponent the statement can also be given jointly. Statement(s) should be 3-5 pages long and include a grade proposal.

The Grading Committee delivers to the Faculty its statement form, in which it evaluates the merits and shortcomings of the dissertation, assesses the disputant's performance in defending the dissertation and makes a proposal for approving and for the dissertation's grade. All the members of the Grading Committee must sign the statement.

The Grading Committee's proposal of the grade does not need to be unanimous. In a case the proposal is unanimous, each member of the grading committee must give reasoned statements using statement form.



When proposing the grade Pass with Distinction the below mentioned criteria must be met most explicitly. A detailed written statement of the exceptional academic quality and merits of the dissertation must be included or attached to the statement of the evaluation committee. When proposing the grade Pass with Distinction the dissertation should represent the highest 10% quality of its field.

The assessment criteria for a doctoral dissertation are:

Choice of topic, research problem, outlining the research topic and research questions: The topic should have significant information value and yet the research task should be appropriately defined.

Acknowledgement of previous research: The work must serve as an appropriate continuation of a previous debate or introduce a completely new initiative. Previous research must thus be acknowledged, but not repeated as such.

Conceptual clarity, definitions and theoretical knowledge: The reader must be able to fathom what the research is about.

Methods: The methods used must be presented and justified.

Material: The material must be qualitatively relevant in relation to the topic and quantitatively sufficient.

Results and conclusions: The scientific significance of the results and conclusions should be neither exaggerated nor underestimated. The analysis must be logical and include different points of view. Interesting prospects for follow-up research and social relevance of the research can be considered as extra merits.

Format: The structure of the dissertation must be logical and the language clear. The basic idea must not be overwhelmed by a superfluity of information.

Critical approach: The writer should demonstrate a critical attitude towards previous research, theories, methods, materials, sources and the scientific significance of their own work. In other words, good research is original and independent.

Consistency: If the doctoral dissertation is a compilation of several publications or manuscripts accepted for publication, in their statements the pre-examiners must evaluate whether these focus on the same topic and thus form a consistent scholarly work.

When proposing the grade Pass with Distinction the above-mentioned criteria must be met most explicitly. The exceptional innovative merits of the dissertation in comparison to dissertations of the discipline in general must be stated explicitly. When proposing the grade Pass with Distinction the dissertation should represent the highest 10% quality of its field.

The delivery of the statements and other documents

Please email signed statement and other required documents to humpostgraduate@utu.fi.

For mailing address, please contact humpostgraduate@utu.fi.

Additional information

Please contact primarily Custos, secondly the Faculty Office humpostgraduate@utu.fi.

