UNIVERSITY OF TURKU

Pre-examiner instructions
17 April 2026

Faculty of Science

INFORMATION FOR PRE-EXAMINERS OF DOCTORAL DISSERTATION

In the Faculty of Science at the University of Turku, there are three-level degrees: Bachelor's degree (normative duration 3 years of full-time studies), Master's degree (normative duration 2 years) and doctoral degree (normative duration 3-4 years). The title of the doctoral degree is Doctor of Philosophy (in Finnish: filosofian tohtori).

An accepted doctoral dissertation is an essential requirement for completing a doctoral degree. The doctoral dissertation may be in the form of either a compilation of several scientific publications, including an introductory chapter summarizing the publications, or a monograph.

A doctoral dissertation based on scientific peer-reviewed publications consists of a general introduction chapter (detailing the objectives, methods and outcomes of the research conducted, as well as a review of them) and at least three scientific articles, two of which need to be published or accepted for publication in a peer-reviewed publication series. If the doctoral researcher has not made clear and significant contributions to each of the three scientific publications, more publications may be needed.

The doctoral researcher must play a central role in at least one article in the doctoral dissertation. Such a role is for example first author or "corresponding author".

The doctoral researcher's contribution to the co-authored publications in the doctoral dissertation is clarified in a statement (a contribution statement) which is signed by the doctoral researcher, all supervisors, and the research director (a supervising professor).

A monograph contains a literature review, research objectives, methods and results, and a review of them. The scope of the monograph must correspond to that of a compilation dissertation.

Two external pre-examiners will first evaluate the proposed dissertation in order to decide whether the proposal constitutes an acceptable dissertation that may be published. On the basis of pre-examiners' recommendations, the faculty will make the final decision in this matter. In the positive case, the dissertation will be published and the author will defend the dissertation in a public examination where there is one opponent nominated by the faculty.

Quality requirements

The purpose of the pre-examination is to establish whether the proposed manuscript satisfies the quality requirements of a doctoral dissertation (quality control). Therefore, particular attention should be paid to the following aspects:

1. A dissertation must contain new scientific findings in its field of research.
2. Theoretical developments, experimental set-ups, measurements, and the data presented in a dissertation should withstand the scrutiny appropriate to scientific research.
3. The author must be capable of presenting their achievements and assertions in a clear, scientific manner.

The pre-examiner should approach a compilation dissertation as a whole, even if separate articles have been accepted for publication in refereed series. **If one or more individual manuscript, included in the collection for the dissertation, have not gone through the refereeing process in a journal, the examiner should make certain that these manuscripts individually satisfy the scientific standards expected for a publication.**

When examining a dissertation manuscript, the pre-examiner should, if possible, compare it against the standards set for dissertations in Finnish or Swedish universities.

Corrections and revisions

If necessary, the pre-examiner may discuss the dissertation manuscript with the doctoral researcher or with the supervising professor in order to confirm and possibly correct statements presented in it. Owing to the time limit imposed on the pre-examination, the examiner should not embark on an actual supervision of the doctoral researcher's research.

The pre-examiner may propose additions, corrections and deletions to the dissertation manuscript in the final statement. If required changes are small, the pre-examiner may leave their supervision to the doctoral researcher's supervisor (indicating this in the statement). If major changes to the dissertation manuscript are necessary before the permission to defend the dissertation can be granted (such changes typically involve flaws in the interpretation of results, lack of data supporting the conclusions etc.), the pre-examiner should discuss the matter with the doctoral researcher and their supervisor. In this case, the doctoral researcher should make corrections and additions to the dissertation manuscript, based on the pre-examiner's advice and send a new version of the dissertation manuscript to them before a final statement about granting a permission to defend the dissertation for the revised dissertation manuscript is sent to the faculty.

On the form of the pre-examiner's statement

A typical statement is 2-3 pages long and should discuss the proposed dissertation in some detail.

Toward the close of the statement, the pre-examiner should clearly state whether a permission to publish the dissertation can be granted.

Doctoral dissertations are graded as "accepted with honours", "accepted", or "rejected". The grading of doctoral dissertations is conducted on the basis of the statements from the official examiners (two pre-examiners and an opponent). If all examiners estimate in their statements that the doctoral dissertation is on the same level as the top 10% of dissertations in its field internationally, the dissertation can be accepted with honours. We ask the pre-examiner to state explicitly whether or not the doctoral dissertation is in the top 10% of doctoral dissertations in its field internationally.

Grading criteria
At least the following aspects must be considered when grading a doctoral dissertation

- significance, originality, or novelty of the research setting in relation to other completed and ongoing research in the field in question;
- justifiability of the chosen research methods, originality of the methodology and development of new methods;
- quality, impact, and theoretical or practical significance of the research results;
- proof of familiarity with the field of research in question and the researcher's ability to critically examine his or her own and other research; and
- coherence, clarity and other issues concerning the style of the presentation.

The pre-examiner is kindly requested to note that entering the dissertation manuscript or a part thereof into any generative AI program is not permitted.

Time limit

The pre-examiner should present the statement within one month from the initial receipt of the official request.

Language of the statement

The statement can be written in Finnish if all signatories of the contribution statement understand Finnish. Otherwise, English is recommended.