

Guidelines for Opponents and Members of the Grading Committee

Based on The Faculty's Post Graduate Study Guide (Faculty Council 8 June 2022) and The Faculty of Humanities Guidelines for an Article-Based Doctoral Dissertation (updated 19 Jan 2022).

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 he/she is / they are visiting the university.

The Custos introduces the Opponent(s) and the 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

If the Custos is the supervisor of the doctoral dissertation, they can participate in the committee meeting as the chair, but they are not allowed to participate in the evaluation of the dissertation or proposing the grade. In that case, the Custos asks the third member of the grading committee appointed by the Faculty to act as the chair and secretary of the Grading Committee during the evaluation of the dissertation.

The members of the grading committee include the Opponent(s), the Custos and one or a maximum of two adjunct professors, who usually represent one of the related disciplines at the University of Turku, and who have not participated in the supervision of the dissertation.

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 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) must include a grade proposal. 3-5 pages statement will suffice.

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.

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 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 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 .

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. (The Faculty recommends that the length of a monograph dissertation should not exceed ca. 250 pages, appendices not included.)

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. A detailed statement of the exceptional academic quality and merits of the dissertation must be attached to the statement form of the evaluation committee. 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 your signed statement and other required documents to humpostgraduate@utu.fi

NB: If mailed, please inform humpostgraduate@utu.fi.

Mailing address:
Faculty of Humanities
Doctoral Training
Signum Service Point
FI-20014 UNIVERSITY OF TURKU.

Additional information

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