



HOW TO ASSESS A PHD THESIS GUIDELINES FOR PHD ASSESSORS

IMPORTANT TO KNOW AS A PHD ASSESSOR

- The Graduate School submits the thesis to the committee members electronically. The committee has two months, starting from the day the thesis is received, to conduct its assessment and write and return the recommendation.
- The chairperson signs the assessment form on behalf of the entire assessment committee. This signature also confirms that the principal supervisor has read and had the chance to commented on the assessment.
- The chairperson is responsible for emailing the assessment form to the Graduate School. The Graduate School must receive the assessment at least 3 weeks prior to the date scheduled for the oral defence.
- Members of the committee cannot have any contact with the PhD student until the written assessment is submitted.
- The members of the committee must attend the oral PhD defence in order to examine the PhD student.

Please do not make any travel arrangements before the thesis is approved for defence. For travel arrangements and assessment fee, please see [more about reimbursements and fees](#).

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE

The Graduate School kindly asks you to:

- Review the PhD thesis and send your contribution to the chairperson of the assessment committee.
- Attend the oral PhD defence and examine the PhD student to initiate an academic discussion.
- Assess at the oral PhD defence whether the PhD student can engage in a discussion of the thesis at an appropriate academic level.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE CHAIRPERSON

The Graduate School kindly asks you to:

- Ensure that all members of the assessment committee have received the thesis, including all co-authorship declarations.
- Confirm to the Graduate School that the assessment process has commenced and organise the assessment work among the members of the committee.
- Collect the contributions, and complete the assessment form with the recommendation of the assessment committee. In the event of dissent, the majority will prevail.
- Obtain the principal supervisor's comments, if any.
- Sign the completed assessment form on behalf of the entire assessment committee and return it to the Graduate School as a PDF file. Please remember to enclose the principal supervisor's comments if any. In case of dissent, all assessors and the principal supervisor must sign the assessment form. The assessment form must be sent to the Graduate School no later than 3 weeks before the date of the defence.
- Chair the oral PhD defence and subsequently submit the PhD defence and signature form with all signatures to the Graduate School by email.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHD PROGRAMME

The PhD programme in Denmark is equivalent to 180 ECTS points which corresponds to 3 years of full-time studies that includes:

- Independent research work under supervision (the PhD project).
- PhD courses or similar study elements totaling approximately 30 ECTS points (corresponding to around ½ year of study time).
- Participating in active research environments, including stays at other, mainly foreign, research institutions.
- Experience of teaching activities or other forms of knowledge dissemination which is related to the PhD project.

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE PHD THESIS

The PhD thesis must document the PhD student's or the author's ability to apply relevant scientific methods and to carry out research work meeting the international standards for PhD degrees within the field in question. The thesis may either be written as a monograph or as a synopsis.

As a general rule, the PhD student may not copy text directly from own manuscripts/papers into the thesis. This is perceived as potential self-plagiarism and is not acceptable. However, generally it is accepted to copy methods descriptions, concrete results incl. figures and tables when appropriately marked and referenced. Of note, the Faculty screens all PhD theses for duplicate text using iThenticate immediately after submission and prior to forwarding to the assessment committee. iThenticate screens PhD theses against published papers, not the students' unpublished manuscripts.

MONOGRAPH

The monograph is typically 100 pages long, but the number of pages can vary.

The monograph should include the following elements:

- Summaries in Danish and English.
- Objectives.
- Methodology: this chapter should briefly summarize the methods used
- Description of the research project placed in the context of international state-of-the-art research within the subject area
- Description of the research carried out (including materials, methods, and results).
- If required for the studies, information on ethical and legal permits and approvals.
- Discussion of results.
- Conclusions and perspectives for further research.
- References.

SYNOPSIS

The synopsis-based thesis consists of a synopsis and published papers and/or unpublished manuscripts. There are no specific requirements concerning the number or type of first or co-authored papers/manuscripts.

The synopsis is typically 30-60 pages long (papers or manuscripts not included), but there are no specific requirements concerning

the number of pages in the synopsis.

The synopsis should clearly and concisely encapsulate and discuss the research findings presented in the manuscripts/papers included in the thesis. The synopsis may also contain additional results not included in the manuscripts/papers.

The synopsis should at least include:

- Summaries in Danish and English.
- Objectives.
- Methodology: this chapter should briefly summarize the methods used
- Description of the research project in the context of international state-of-the-art research within the subject area
- Summary of the results of the papers and their relation to international state-of-the-art research within the subject area.
- Information on ethical and legal permits and approvals, if required for the studies.
- Conclusions and perspectives for further research.
- References.
- Chapters consisting of any papers or manuscripts included in the thesis. The chapters must appear in the end of the thesis.

THE ASSESSMENT

The chairperson is expected to use the assessment form sent with the PhD thesis. The assessment usually consists of 4-8 pages (A4 format) and include:

- **Facts about the thesis:** chapters, articles, manuscripts, no. of pages, etc.
Short description of the thesis.
- **Brief summary of each main section** (if relevant).
- **Evaluation of each main section** of the thesis (mandatory), including, e.g., objectives, hypotheses, methods, results, discussions, perspectives, etc.
 - Does the thesis include clearly formulated research questions that, at the beginning of the PhD study, were relevant, considering current knowledge within the field?
 - Are the methods applied adequate and clearly described, and are they capable of being replicated by other scientists/professionals?
 - Are the results precisely and comprehensively presented?
 - Are the results critically interpreted, and does the interpretation reflect sufficient relevant knowledge within the field?
 - Are the results properly discussed and put into perspective?
- **Co-authorship declarations.** For publications with several authors, the role of the PhD student must be stipulated through a declaration signed by the co-authors. If a manuscript or published paper has eleven or less authors, all authors must sign a declaration of co-authorship. If it has twelve or more authors, only the PhD student, the corresponding author(s), the senior author, and the principal supervisor need to sign the declaration of co-authorship.
- **Conclusion.** Overall assessment of the thesis and concluding remarks. The conclusion must state clearly whether the thesis is acceptable for oral defence.

Please note that in the assessment the emphasis should be placed on the academic content. The ability to articulate is also of importance, while it is not necessary to focus on the spelling unless it distorts the meaning.

ASSESSMENT COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS

The assessment committee must recommend one of the following three options. In the event of dissent within the committee, the majority prevails.

1. The thesis is recommended for oral PhD defence. The oral defence may now take place. *Please be aware that the thesis is accepted in its current form. This means that the student may not make any changes to the thesis.*
2. The PhD student must revise the thesis before an oral PhD defence. *The assessment report must describe specific points of criticism that will enable the student to revise the thesis. The student will have at least three months to revise the thesis and the assessment committee will subsequently have six weeks to assess the revised thesis.*
3. An oral PhD defence cannot take place, and a revised thesis may not be submitted. *Please be aware that the student will not be offered to resubmit the thesis. The assessment report must describe specific points of criticism.*

THE ORAL PHD DEFENCE

BEFORE THE DEFENCE

- Once the Graduate School has received notification about a positive assessment, the thesis can be accepted for defence.
- The PhD student or/and the principal supervisor will contact you regarding the date and venue for the defence.
- The Graduate School will send you the forms for the defence, fee and reimbursements.
- Please book your train tickets, flights and hotel complying with the guidelines for [reimbursements and fees](#). The Graduate School will reimburse your expenses after the defence.
- If you consider participating in the oral defence online, please contact the principal supervisor, who will investigate the possibilities.

DURING THE DEFENCE

The PhD defence is a formal academic event, marking the awarding of one of the highest academic qualifications in Denmark. The Graduate School encourages that the defence is conducted in a professional and respectful atmosphere, where presentations by the student and the following discussion with assessors are delivered in a manner that upholds the dignity of the occasion in front of the audience. The defence venue should be equipped with appropriate audiovisual facilities to support the presentations.

The duration of the PhD defence should not exceed three hours, including breaks. The PhD defence is open to the public and has the following agenda:

- The chairperson welcomes the participants and chairs the public PhD defence.
- The PhD student presents the thesis. In the presentation the PhD student has the opportunity to address comments from the written assessment and to specify contributions made to the field (max. 45 minutes).
- The assessment committee examines the PhD student and facilitates an academic discussion based on the thesis and the PhD student's presentation.
- At the end of the session, the audience is given the opportunity to ask questions.

AFTER THE DEFENCE

- Following the defence, the assessment committee retreats to determine its final recommendation as to whether the author should be awarded the PhD degree. The principal

supervisor is not allowed to participate in this discussion but can be invited to clarify details if necessary.

- All members of the assessment committee sign the final recommendation, which states whether the committee recommends that the PhD degree is awarded or not.
- If the assessment committee is unable to reach an agreement, the recommendation of each assessor must be stated on the form. If there is dissent within the committee, the majority will prevail.
- The chairperson must email the signed PhD defence and signature form to the Graduate School.
- Foreign assessor: Prior to the defence, the Graduate School will send you forms for the reimbursement of travel expenses and assessment fee.
- Danish assessor (not chairperson): Prior to the defence, the Graduate School will send you a link, and the staff at Graduate School will take care of reimbursement and fee. Self-service is also available in RejsUd.

QUESTIONS?

Please contact the Graduate School of Health and Medical Sciences graduateschool@sund.ku.dk or +45 35 32 65 70