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# Guidelines for PhD assessors

Assessing a PhD thesis at the Graduate School of Health and  
Medical Sciences

November 2017



## What you need to know as a member of the assessment committee

- The committee has two months to complete the assessment and submit the recommendation.
- The chairperson signs the assessment form on behalf of the entire assessment committee and by his/her signature also confirms that the principal supervisor has read and possibly commented the assessment. *NB: In case of dissent, all assessors and the principal supervisor must sign the assessment form.*
- The 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 [Guidelines for reimbursements](#).

**Questions?** Please contact the Graduate School of Health and Medical Sciences [phdschool@sund.ku.dk](mailto:phdschool@sund.ku.dk) / +45 35 32 65 70

### Responsibilities of all committee members

The Graduate School kindly asks you to:

- Review the PhD thesis, and send your contribution to the chairperson. *(Please do not send your individual contributions to the Graduate School.)*
- 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 is capable of engaging 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.
- 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 the assessment form. In case of dissent, all assessors and the principal supervisor must sign the assessment form.
- Chair the oral PhD defence and subsequently submit the PhD defence and signature form with all signatures to the Graduate School by email.

## 2. The assessment

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 is responsible for submitting the assessment form by email to the Graduate School.

The primary aim of the assessment is to evaluate whether the PhD thesis is on an internationally recognised level and reflects three years of research, education, and professional/scientific work. The assessment usually consists of four to eight pages (A4 format) and would typically 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?
- **List of publications.** With respect to publications with several authors, the role of the PhD student must be stipulated through a declaration. The declaration must be signed by the co-authors, complying with the requirements of the Graduate School. If there are more than ten co-authors, only signatures from the corresponding author(s), the senior author and the principal supervisor (if relevant) are required.
- **Conclusion.** Overall assessment of the thesis and concluding remarks. The conclusion must state clearly whether the thesis is acceptable for oral defence.

*The chairperson is advised to use the assessment form sent with the PhD thesis.*

### 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.*

### 3. Oral PhD defence

#### Before the defence

- Once the Graduate School has received a positive assessment, the thesis can be accepted for defence.
- The PhD student 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 reimbursement](#). The Graduate School will reimburse your expenses after the defence.
- If you consider participating in the oral defence by audio-visual conference, please contact the principal supervisor, who will look into the possibilities.

#### During the defence

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 min.).
- Each assessor asks questions to initiate an academic discussion with the PhD student.
- At the end of the session, the audience is given the opportunity to ask questions.

#### After the defence

- All members of the committee sign the final recommendation, which states whether the assessment committee recommends that the PhD degree is awarded.
- 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 submit the signed PhD defence and signature form to the Graduate School by email.
- 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, 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.
- Please contact the [Graduate School](#) if you have any questions concerning reimbursement.