Guidelines for the assessment of a doctoral dissertation
**Introduction**

The doctoral degree (a research doctorate) is the highest academic degree which can be achieved at a university in Denmark. The doctoral degree is awarded to an individual who has demonstrated considerable scientific insight and maturity and has contributed substantially to the advancement of science through independent research.

Whereas the PhD degree can be achieved after successful completion of a research programme under supervision, the doctoral degree shall be awarded in acknowledgement of:

- the author’s considerable scientific insight and maturity, and
- the author having contributed substantially to the advancement of science with the dissertation, cf. section 3 (2) in the Doctoral Order.

The assessment report shall provide a reasoned, written recommendation as to whether the dissertation should be accepted for oral defense of doctoral degree or be rejected. The report has to provide a sufficient basis for The Academic Council’s decision to accept or reject the dissertation for oral defense. The report therefore must not require the reader to confer with the author’s written works. Furthermore, it has to allow non-expert members of The Academic Council to follow the line of thinking from premises to conclusion.

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**In brief about assessing a doctoral dissertation**

- The deadline for submitting the written assessment report to the Dean’s office is usually within three months from the day the assessment committee receives the doctoral dissertation.
- Contact between the author and the assessment committee must take place only through the Dean’s office.

**Who constitutes an assessment committee?**

An assessment committee consists of three members:

- A chairman, who is employed by the Faculty, and
- two members of which preferably at least one should represent a university abroad.

The committee members must be experts in the dissertation topic and be either professors or possess comparable qualifications. Only members of the assessment committee may participate in the assessment.

**What will be expected from the assessment report?**

The assessment report – which must be written in English - should include:

- A cover with:
  - The author’s name, the title of the dissertation, the composition of the assessment committee.

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1 Order no. 750 of 14th of August 1996 about doctoral degrees issued by the Ministry of Education
• A description of the elements constituting the dissertation, including whether any of the research results have previously formed the basis of an in Denmark or abroad awarded academic degree or a prize thesis.

• Whether the dissertation or parts of it are the result of collaboration - then the author’s contribution to the work must be outlined on the basis of co-author declarations.

- Evaluation of the review (the compressed account)² in the dissertation (1-3 pages)
  o An assessment of whether the author has provided a well-structured summary of the research findings, the author claims to have obtained. Previously rated work (e.g. PhD) must also be reflected in the summary, with the new research findings set in relation to previously rated work with a clear description of the respective field. The author must also put the results of the dissertation into perspective in relation to the field and to that of other researchers’ published work.
  o Finally the evaluation of the summary should conclude whether the aim set up in the dissertation has been achieved.

- An assessment of the individual articles (approx. 1-2 pages for each paper) with a detailed assessment of each article, considering:
  o The originality and relevance of the hypothesis/problem raised,
  o whether appropriate methods have been selected to approach the hypothesis/problem raised,
  o whether the presentation and interpretation of the results achieved are presented and dealt with in a sufficient manner,
  o whether the discussion puts the results into a relevant context of present knowledge.
  o Finally the overall assessment of each article should conclude about the positive and the negative scientific aspects of the work presented in the article, and state whether the paper is a significant contribution to the field.

- The overall assessment of the dissertation – the final conclusion has to include (1/2 page)
  o An assessment of all major aspects, including the aim of the dissertation, its importance to the field, the originality of the work presented in the dissertation, the results achieved, and the conclusions drawn. An assessment of whether the author 1) has demonstrated considerable scientific insight and maturity and 2) has contributed substantially to the advancement of science with the dissertation. The Assessment committee is kindly asked to use these two exact phrases in the conclusion.
  o Finally the assessment report must unequivocally conclude whether the (majority of) the committee finds that the dissertation should be accepted for public oral defense or not.

² Order no. 750 of 14th of August 1996 about doctoral degrees issued by the Ministry of Education
It is important that the final conclusion in a coherent and comprehensive way reflects the conclusion of the evaluation of the individual elements in the dissertation (summary and articles). If there is a difference of opinion in the committee about the recommendation the members shall report singly or in groups.

**How is the work of the assessment organized?**
The assessment consists of a written report and a public oral defense.

**Responsibilities of the chairman**
- The chairman must organize the work among the members, collect the contributions and complete the report so that it appears as a joint work and takes an objective form.
- The chairman is asked to submit the report including all members’ signatures to the Dean’s office.
- The chairman is requested to ensure that the deadline for submitting the report is complied with.

**Responsibilities of the other committee members**
- The other members shall review the doctoral dissertation and contribute to the assessment report and
- will be appointed as official opponents at the public oral defense if the doctoral dissertation is accepted. The public defense typically takes place in Copenhagen.
- Comply with deadlines provided.

**What are the roles in relation to the oral defense?**
If the dissertation is accepted for oral defense by The Academic Council the assessment committee will be contacted by the author to find a date for the defense. The author is responsible for booking suitable facilities and all other practical arrangements regarding the defense.

Prior to the defense the Dean’s office will send all documents needed for the defense.

The appointed chairman of the defense (not the chairman of the assessment committee) opens the defense and then the author has the opportunity to give a 30 minutes lecture.

The members of the assessment committee who have been appointed as official opponents will each be given not more than 1½ hours for their opposition.

Unofficial opponents must announce themselves to the chairman of the defense before the defense begins. However, the chairman of the defense can allow later announcements from unofficial opponents, too.

The total duration of the oral defense should not exceed six hours, including breaks.

Afterward the oral defense the official opponents will sign a statement whether the oral defense has been found satisfactory or not.
The chairman of the defense will forward the signed document to the Dean’s office.

**Assessment fee and travel costs**
The standard assessment fee for the external official opponents is approximately DKK 8,400 (EUR 1,100).

Concerning the travel costs the Dean’s office will reimburse official opponents travel costs after the defense. However, the opponents are kindly asked to book and disburse the costs for the flight and hotel. The maximum reimbursable airfare is economy class.

For hotels, the amount is DKK 996 (EUR 133) with a maximum of two nights.

Forms for assessment fee and reimbursement are sent to the external opponents by the Dean’s office.

The external opponents are kindly asked to fill out and sign the forms, and to return the forms and all receipts for expenses (scanned) electronically as pdf-files to the Dean’s office for reimbursement, please see e-mail address below.

**For more information or any queries, please, contact the Dean’s office**
- [doctoral-degree@sund.ku.dk](mailto:doctoral-degree@sund.ku.dk)