

Temporary guidelines for the assessment of the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD) at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

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These temporary guidelines replace the guidelines established by the Academic Affairs Committee at OsloMet (formerly Oslo and Akershus University College) on 16 October 2012.

They were last updated on 11/11/2024 to include legal authorisation and references pursuant to the new regulations on the degree of philosophiae doctor (PhD) at OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University adopted by the University Board on 17 September 2024.

The regulations and rules applicable to the degree in question at OsloMet shall be communicated to anyone participating in the assessment of doctoral degree work.

1. [Assessment Committee: Appointment and basis for the committee's work](#)
2. [The responsibilities of the committee chair – progress schedule](#)
3. [Correction of formal errors](#)
4. [Assessment assignment contracts](#)
5. [The assessment](#)
6. [About the recommendation](#)
7. [Assessment criteria and academic level](#)
8. [Trial lecture and public defence](#)

1. Assessment Committee: Appointment and basis for the committee's work

Procedures for appointment and requirements relating to individual members and the composition of the committee as described in Section 6-3 of the regulations.

The committee members shall receive a copy of the doctoral thesis, including an overview of where the work has been carried out and who the academic supervisors were. Additionally, any article-based theses shall also include the following appendices:

- status of the articles: whether they have been submitted, accepted, published – and if so where
- the principles that form the basis for the order of any co-authors
- confirmation from any co-author(s) (separate co-authorship form) of the candidate's contributions to each article/publication and, if applicable, their consent to the work being used as part of the doctoral thesis

2. The responsibilities of the committee chair – progress schedule

To ensure expedient procedures, one of the members will be appointed to chair the committee. It is normal for the chair of the committee to be a representative of the institution.

The chair of the committee will be responsible for organising the committee's work, including ensuring that work is carried out as quickly as possible and that the time limit set for the committee's work is met.

The chair shall ensure that the date for any public defence is determined as quickly as possible. The recommendation is for public defences to be scheduled for working days, i.e. Fridays.

The progress schedule should generally facilitate recommendations being available within three months of the thesis having been received by the committee.

The progress schedule must facilitate recommendations being available 5-6 weeks before the date of the public defence. If the recommendation has not been submitted to the Faculty/Centre at OsloMet responsible for the PhD programme no later than one month before the scheduled public defence, the public defence date must be deferred.

If the committee is pushed for time in relation to these deadlines, a final copy of the recommendation may be signed by the chair of the committee and submitted to the Faculty/Centre at the same time that the original is circulated for signatures from the other two members.

The chair must help coordinate the committee's recommendation and clarify the division of work between committee members during the public defence.

3. Correction of formal errors

A PhD candidate may request the correction of formal errors in the version of the thesis that will be published. The deadline for submitting a request, including an errata list, shall be one week after the recommendation has been received by the candidate. The correction of formal errors may take place only once. The assessment committee shall be notified of the approval and content of the errata list prior to the public defence.

4. Assessment assignment contracts

The Assessment Assignment Contract – Doctoral Theses and Public Defences – shall be submitted to committee members as soon as the distribution of work between the committee members has been clarified.

The assessment itself shall be remunerated on the basis of fixed rates and as follows:

- Committee members shall be remunerated for 30 hours for the assessment of the thesis
- The first opponent shall also be remunerated for an additional 20 hours for their opposition
- The second opponent shall also be remunerated for an additional 15 hours for their opposition
- In the event that the thesis is returned with a request for the thesis to be revised within three months, the committee members shall be remunerated for 20 hours to read the revised version

The committee will ordinarily communicate about the recommendation via email or telephone. If the committee wishes to convene a separate meeting, this shall be agreed with the Faculty/Centre. The recommendation, signed by all members of the committee, shall be submitted to OsloMet, care of the Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme. The Faculty/Centre will issue a copy of the recommendation to the PhD candidate and the PhD committee. The committee is not required to inform the candidate (or academic supervisor(s)) of the outcome of the assessment.

5. The assessment

The assessment of the thesis may initially have one of three different conclusions:

- Approval: Thesis considered to be of adequate quality for public defence
- Revise thesis: The PhD candidate is asked to revise the thesis within three months
- Not approved: Thesis not considered to be of adequate quality for public defence

The outcome/decision of the assessment committee may be:

- Unanimous
- Divided

5.1.1 Procedures when the thesis is considered to be of adequate quality for public defence

Pursuant to Section 6-8(3), the assessment committee's recommendation shall be presented to the PhD candidate, who will be given a deadline of ten working days to submit any written remarks on the recommendation. If the PhD candidate does not wish to submit remarks, the Faculty/Centre must be notified of this in writing without undue delay. The Faculty/Centre will inform the committee.

The PhD committee at the Faculty/Centre will make a decision on whether the thesis is considered adequate for public defence based on the committee's recommendation. If the thesis is approved, the expert committee will be authorised by letter from the Faculty/Centre to organise a trial lecture and public defence. The public defence shall be held at the University and will be led by the Dean/Head of Centre or an individual authorised by the Dean/Head of Centre.

5.1.2 Procedures when the candidate is asked to revise the thesis

The committee will only return a thesis in cases where a revision would ordinarily lead to a satisfactory result within a three-month timeframe, cf. Section 6-6 of the regulations. When returning a thesis, the committee shall explain its preliminary assessment and specify in writing what should be revised in order for the thesis to be approved.

The decision to return a thesis for revision shall be submitted via OsloMet, care of the Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme to which the PhD candidate is admitted.

Ordinarily, the same committee will be asked to provide a final recommendation. The committee must conduct a comprehensive new assessment of the revised thesis. The new deadline for the committee's recommendation shall run from the date on which the thesis is resubmitted.

5.1.3 Procedures when the thesis is not considered to be of adequate quality for public defence

If the committee finds that significant changes relating to theories, hypotheses, materials or methods are necessary for the work to be recommended for public defence, the thesis shall not be approved, pursuant to Section 6-8(4) of the regulations.

A thesis, trial lecture or public defence that is not approved may be appealed pursuant to Sections 28 onwards of the Norwegian Public Administration Act. A reasoned appeal must be lodged with the OsloMet Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme. The University may test all aspects of the appealed decision.

If the thesis is not approved, resubmission may take place only after six months have passed, cf. Section 6-10(1) of the regulations.

The Faculty/Centre must then appoint a new assessment committee, cf. Section 6-10(2) of the regulations. The new assessment committee shall carry out its assessment on independent grounds. Reassessment may only take place once.

5.2 Procedures when the assessment committee's decision is unanimous or divided

Unanimous recommendation

A unanimous recommendation shall be upheld as long as the majority of the PhD committee at the Faculty/Centre votes in favour. If the majority finds – despite the unanimous recommendation from the assessment committee – that there are justified grounds for doubts concerning whether a thesis should be approved, the PhD committee at the Faculty/Centre must seek further clarification from the

assessment committee, cf. Section 6-9(2) of the regulations. The PhD committee may also appoint two new specialists to provide individual statements on the thesis. The PhD candidate must be given the opportunity to submit remarks. The PhD committee shall subsequently make a decision on the matter based on the recommendation and the statements obtained.

Divided recommendation

The Faculty/Centre can uphold either the recommendation of the majority or the recommendation of the minority pursuant to Section 6-9(3) of the regulations. If following a minority recommendation, the Faculty/Centre must, pursuant to Section 6-9(2) of the regulations, “seek further clarification from the assessment committee and/or appoint two new experts. The experts shall submit individual statements on the thesis.” If the new experts agree with the majority recommendation, this shall form the basis for the Faculty’s/Centre’s decision.

The PhD candidate must be given the opportunity to submit remarks on the recommendation. The remarks will be sent to the committee. The University usually prefers the committee to respond to remarks in order to ensure the best possible basis for decision-making. The committee’s response should be available as soon as possible. The remarks from the PhD candidate do not constitute a formal appeal – such an appeal may only be lodged after a decision has been made.

6. About the recommendation

Ultimately, the committee will provide a recommendation as to whether or not the thesis is of adequate quality for public defence. The recommendation and any dissent must be justified, cf. Section 6-8(2) of the regulations.

6.1 Target group for the recommendation

OsloMet is the primary target group for the recommendation. The recommendation must therefore constitute an adequate basis for decision-making when deciding whether a thesis is of adequate quality for public defence.

6.2 Formal requirements

The recommendation must be addressed to the OsloMet Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme. The recommendation must include a header/introduction referencing the degree in question, the title of the thesis and any individual works contained therein.

The recommendation must be justified, dated and signed by the members of the assessment committee.

If the thesis has been submitted following the assessment committee’s request for revision, this must be noted in the introduction.

6.3 Description of the thesis

The recommendation must initially provide factual information about the thesis and particularly:

- the format and size, as well as any articles the thesis is comprised of
- the type of thesis (for example theoretical/empirical work)
- what the thesis is about and the aims of the thesis: the scientific significance of the thesis
- the most important aspects relating to theories, hypotheses, materials and methods
- the findings and main conclusions of the thesis.

This descriptive section should not exceed one page, should not constitute the majority of the recommendation and should generally comprise the assessment committee’s summary (rather than the candidate’s summary).

In the assessment section of the recommendation, an assessment and weighting of the strong and weak elements of the thesis will be performed. This will lead to a conclusion as to whether or not the committee finds the thesis to be of adequate quality for public defence or whether the committee recommends that the thesis not be approved for public defence. Although the committee is encouraged to provide constructive criticism, it is important to ensure that there is cohesion between conditions and conclusions, so that the recommendation provides satisfactory grounds for consideration by the University. The recommendation for a thesis recommended for approval should not include too many critical remarks.

6.4 Differences between positive, divided and negative recommendations

In cases where the committee concludes that it will approve a thesis as being of adequate quality for public defence, the justification should be brief. If the committee finds that the thesis contains details that should be corrected before the thesis is printed, a brief list of typos and recommendations for minor corrections (errata list) should be enclosed as an appendix to the recommendation.

If the committee is divided, it is normally requested that the committee draws up a joint statement, individual statements can be enclosed. Any dissent within assessment committees must always be reasoned. In cases where the committee agrees on the conclusion but disagrees on the conditions, it may also be desirable for individual statements to be enclosed.

If the committee concludes that the thesis is not of adequate quality for public defence, the committee must submit a more detailed justification of its conclusion. Any major shortcomings associated with the thesis will be key, rather than details that do not affect the outcome of the committee's conclusion.

7. Assessment criteria and academic level

The committee may obtain further information if the PhD candidate's own documentation is inadequate. In special cases, the committee may request data and supplementary or explanatory additional information, cf. Section 6-5 of the regulations.

7.1 The academic level and what the assessment committee should emphasise in its assessment

A Norwegian doctoral degree constitutes certification of research expertise at a specific level. The quality of the thesis must be of a level that indicates that the thesis can be published as part of the scientific literature in the field of research.

The thesis must satisfy the minimum requirements for research expertise – expressed through requirements relating to research question formulation, precision and logical stringency, originality, proficiency in relevant analysis methods and reflection on their possibilities and limitations, as well as an overview of, understanding of and reflective approach to other research in the field.

In assessing the thesis, emphasis will be placed on whether the thesis is an independent and comprehensive scientific work at a high academic level. It is of particular importance to the assessment whether the materials and method are appropriate for the questions raised in the thesis and whether the arguments and conclusions presented are valid.

7.2 Assessment of theses comprising individual works or joint works

If the thesis comprises multiple individual works, the PhD candidate must summarise and document the correlation in a dedicated part of the thesis (summary). If the individual works do not include a discussion of central concepts, data, methods, etc., these must also be detailed in the summary.

In the case of joint works, the committee must receive a statement from any co-author(s). Based on the statement, the committee must assess whether the PhD candidate's contribution to the work(s) can be adequately identified and whether the candidate is solely responsible for an adequately large proportion of the thesis. The summary of the thesis must be drawn up independently by the PhD candidate.

8. Trial lecture and public defence

The trial lecture and public defence should ordinarily take place on the same day. In the event that members of the assessment committee are unable to attend the trial lecture, the Faculty/Centre may appoint deputy members pursuant to Sections 7-1 and 6-3(6) of the regulations, provided that at least one committee member participates in both the trial lecture and the public defence.

8.1 Trial lecture

The assessment committee will determine the subject of the trial lecture. The PhD candidate should ordinarily receive the title of the trial lecture 10 working days before the trial lecture is scheduled to take place. The committee must submit the specified subject for the trial lecture to the OsloMet Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme 14 days before the trial lecture. The Faculty/Centre must ensure that the subject of the trial lecture is communicated to the PhD candidate.

The trial lecture constitutes an independent part of the doctoral examination and shall cover a given subject that is not directly linked to the subject of the thesis.

The public defence moderator will also moderate the trial lecture and establish the surrounding framework. The public defence moderator will deliver the welcome address, introduce the PhD candidate and moderate any subsequent questions and discussion. The entire assessment committee is expected to be present during the trial lecture. Cf. also Section 8 above and Sections 7-1 and 6-3(6) of the regulations.

The actual trial lecture should take 45 minutes, including a few minutes for questions and/or discussion. The purpose of the trial lecture is for the PhD candidate to be able to document their capacity for the dissemination of research-based knowledge. The lecture should normally be structured so that it can be easily followed by those whose prerequisite knowledge corresponds to what could reasonably be expected for intermediate students in the field. In assessing the trial lecture, both academic content and capacity for dissemination will be emphasised. The trial lecture must be “original”.

The committee’s assessment of the trial lecture must be announced before the public defence.

A trial lecture must have very significant shortcomings in order not to be approved. If the trial lecture is not approved, the public defence can go ahead and a new trial lecture may be held, once, on a new subject, within six months of the initial attempt. A doctorate will not be conferred upon the candidate, nor will they receive a doctoral degree certificate before the trial lecture has also been approved.

8.2 Public defence

The entire assessment committee is expected to be present during the public defence, as this constitutes an oral component of the assessment, cf. Section 7-3 of the regulations.

The PhD candidate must, at least three weeks before the public defence, provide the OsloMet Faculty/Centre responsible for the PhD programme with the prescribed number of copies of the final thesis and any errata list showing all corrections to the latest version compared to the version that formed the basis for the committee’s assessment, cf. Section 6-7(3) of the regulations.

A copy of the errata list and a new version of the thesis must immediately be submitted to the committee.

8.3 The public defence moderator’s responsibility for the framework of the public defence

The public defence will be moderated by the Dean/Head of Centre or an individual authorised by the Dean/Head of Centre. The public defence moderator is responsible for the appropriate allocation of time in relation to the implementation of the various aspects of the public defence and within the timeframe established for the public defence as a whole.

8.4 The practical implementation of the public defence

The public defence moderator will provide a brief report on the submission and the assessment of the thesis and the trial lecture. Subsequently, the candidate will explain the purpose and results of the scientific investigation. The first opponent will initiate the opposition and will often place the thesis into a wider academic context. The first opponent will then address the specific discussions and objections in the thesis that the PhD candidate must answer. The opponents can freely divide their responsibilities between themselves. It is assumed that the overall public defence, including a break of around 15 minutes between the two opponents, will take no more than three hours. The second opponent should take slightly less time than the first opponent. Cf. Section 7-3(3) of the regulations.

The Faculty/Centre may stipulate a different division of responsibilities, cf. Section 7-3(4) of the regulations.

The public defence moderator may permit others in attendance to participate in the discussion ex auditorio after the ordinary opponents have concluded their opposition. The public defence moderator will conclude the public defence.

If the thesis has been submitted entirely as a joint work, the committee – in consultation with the public defence moderator – will determine how any public defence will be implemented.

8.5 The academic implementation and assessment of the public defence

The public defence must be an academic discussion between the opponents and the candidate on the subject of research question formulation, methodology, empirical and theoretical data, documentation and presentation format. Particular emphasis must be placed on the verification of the validity of key conclusions drawn by the candidate in their work. The research questions that the opponents choose to pursue do not need to be limited to those addressed in the committee's recommendation.

Opponents should, to the extent possible, strive to ensure that discussions take place in a format that also enables those who have not read the thesis or do not have detailed knowledge of the field to follow the discussion.

8.6 Termination of the public defence, the committee's report and the closing proceedings

The public defence moderator will declare the public defence completed. In connection with this, the public defence moderator will not provide an assessment of the public defence, but will reference the fact that the committee's assessment of the public defence will be provided in the committee's report through separate minutes submitted to the Faculty/Centre, cf. Section 7-4 of the regulations.

If a work is found to be of adequate quality for public defence, this will normally lead to the thesis and public defence thereof being approved for the doctoral degree. In the event that the recommendation is approved, the Faculty/Centre will confer the degree of philosophiae doctor upon the candidate, cf. Section 7-5(1) of the regulations.

Nevertheless, if – in light of new factors that come to light during the public defence – the central conclusions of the thesis are clearly found to be invalid, the assessment committee must assess the public defence as not approved. The same will apply if, during the public defence, any unacceptable factors of significance to the assessment of the work come to light, such as clear violations of research ethics standards and sound academic practices in general.