



FACULTY  
OF SCIENCE

DECISION

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Dean

## **Management regulations for the public defence of doctoral theses at the Faculty of Science**

Chapter 6 sections 33-35 of the Higher Education Ordinance states that the University is to arrange public events within whose framework doctoral students studying for a PhD can orally defend their doctoral theses. The public defence is to be attended by an external reviewer (opponent), and at least one person who does not work at the higher education institution where the doctoral student is being assessed must participate in the grading of the thesis. Decisions on further regulations concerning the grading system to be applied, and on the public defence and the grading process in general, are delegated to the University. Such local regulations concerning the organisation of public defences of doctoral theses have been approved by the vice-chancellor in Section 12 of the Regulations for doctoral education at Lund University (STYR 2018/562). The regulations delegate decisions on matters including the time and venue to the faculty boards. Pursuant to the rules of procedure for the Faculty of Science, the operational decision-making authority for these matters is further delegated to the vice-dean for third cycle studies, whereas the decision-making authority to approve policies and principles for the public defence and distribution of doctoral theses is delegated to the dean. With reference to the latter decision-making authority, the following rules are approved for the organisation of public defences of doctoral theses at the Faculty of Science.

## Planning a public defence

Pursuant to the faculty's rules of procedure and delegation rules, the public defence of a doctoral thesis is to be organised once the departmental representative has ascertained that the doctoral student has achieved all course credits and compulsory elements scheduled in the study plan for completion before the public defence.

## Requesting a public defence

Once the departmental representative has ascertained the achievement of all course credits and compulsory elements scheduled for completion before the public defence, the rules of procedure and delegation stipulate that a public defence is to be requested. The request is to include a proposed time and venue, chair, external reviewer (opponent) and examining committee members including a substitute. The request is to be sent to the faculty office at the Faculty of Science, no later than eight weeks before the proposed date of the public defence. The request is submitted by the departmental representative or the head of department via the online form available on the faculty's website and according to the instructions on the faculty home page. The request is to be printed, signed by the departmental representative or the head of department, and sent in to the faculty office.

The request is to include the following attachments:

- Declarations on non-conflict of interest from the external reviewer and the members of the examining committee, including the substitute.
- A brief CV for all examining committee members
- A separate justification for the proposal of names in cases where there are special reasons for exemption from certain requirements.
- For a compilation thesis, a list of the papers included in the thesis is to be attached, as well as an account, certified by the principal supervisor, of the author's own contribution to each

co-authored article in the thesis with regard to planning, data collection, data analysis, manuscript writing and individual initiatives.

- For unpublished articles, state whether they exist only as manuscripts, whether they have been submitted to a publisher or whether they have been accepted for publication. It is to be clear whether the articles have been used in another thesis besides the one at hand, or whether there are plans to do so.

## Processing and decision

After processing by the faculty office at the Faculty of Science, a decision is taken according to the faculty's rules of procedure and delegation, on the time and venue for the public defence of the doctoral thesis, appointment of an external reviewer and the composition of examining committee, including a substitute, by the vice dean for third cycle studies.

## Time and venue for a public defence

Public defences of doctoral theses are to be scheduled during the semester unless special circumstances apply (STYR 2018/562). The Faculty of Science deems special circumstances always to apply with regard to scheduling public defences up to and including the last Friday before Midsummer. No public defences of doctoral theses take place at the Faculty of Science between 22 December and 6 January.

Within the faculty, two public defences may be scheduled per day within the same subject area, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. A public defence is not to take place at the same time as a public defence within an adjacent subject area at the Faculty of Engineering (LTH). Exceptions can be made if special circumstances apply.

Public defences of doctoral theses are to take place in Lund unless there are special reasons to choose a different location.

## Chair

The thesis author's departmental representative can be a suitable person to appoint as chair of the public defence, but the chair can

also be another teaching staff member at the department. The supervisor is not permissible as chair. The chair of the public defence cannot simultaneously be a member or substitute in the examining committee.

### External reviewer

The person appointed as external reviewer is to be an associate professor (docent) or someone with equivalent qualifications within the subject field of the thesis. The external reviewer is not to be employed at Lund University and is to have no links to the doctoral student and the supervisors (see section on conflict of interest below). An emeritus can be appointed as external reviewer.

### Examining committee

The examining committee is to consist of three members but can, if special circumstances apply, consist of five members. A special circumstance can be that the doctoral thesis is of such nature that essential parts of the thesis cannot be assessed by three members only.

Members of the examining committee are to be associate professors (docents) at least, or to have equivalent qualifications. In that case, they are to hold the qualifications expected of an associate professor (docent), such as substantial post-doctoral academic production and some experience of supervision. A member from business or industry who has a long professional experience is not to be considered as having qualifications equivalent to those of an associate professor (docent) if they do not hold the equivalent academic qualifications. An emeritus can be a member. Both genders are to be represented in the committee. If this requirement cannot be met, the reasons for it are to be recorded in the request for the public defence.

Members are to have no links to the author of the thesis and the supervisors (see section on conflict of interest below).

At least one of the examining committee's three regular members is to be external, i.e. affiliated outside Lund University. A person who has recently left LU for a position somewhere else is not considered external for five years after their departure. Likewise, people employed outside LU but who have some kind of formalised collaboration with the author's department are not considered external. One regular member may come from the doctoral student's own department (two members if there are five in the committee). The author's supervisors or departmental representatives cannot be included in the examining committee.

### Substitute member

In addition to the regular members, the vice dean is to appoint (at least) one substitute. This person is subject to the same qualifications requirements as the regular members. The substitute is to be appointed so that they can replace any of the regular members. However, the requirements for the composition of the committee with regard to departmental affiliation and gender representation apply only to regular members, and do not need to be met if the substitute is called in. Regardless of circumstances, however, at least one of the committee members must always be external.

### Conflict of interest

It is essential to ensure that the members of the examining committee and the external reviewer are impartial and objective in their roles. If there are circumstances that could entail a wider audience questioning the objectivity of the examining committee, the doctoral student's interests have not been safeguarded.

In addition to the usual grounds for conflict of interest (Sections 11-12 Public Administration Act) a public defence of a doctoral thesis is exposed to conflict of interest if:

- Over the past five years, the supervisor or doctoral student have collaborated on research or co-produced research with the external reviewer (opponent) or a member of the examining committee. Co-publishing is an example of co-production. With special justification, conflict of interest may

be excluded, e.g. if the collaboration took place within a research consortium where co-publication did not necessarily entail conflict of interest.

- A collaboration between the supervisor and the external reviewer or a member of the examining committee was extensive, even if it took place more than five years previously. If the collaboration took place it is to be recorded in the request for the public defence and the perceived non-conflict of interest must be justified.
- A supervisor-doctoral student relationship (or vice versa) has existed between the supervisor and the external reviewer (opponent) or a member in the examining committee, regardless of how long ago.

### Announcement of a public defence

Announcement (“spikning” in Swedish) entails the doctoral thesis and its defence being made public. This is to be done at the latest three weeks before the public defence. The announcement is not to be made in the period between the last Friday before Midsummer and 15 August, nor between 22 December and 6 January. These periods cannot be counted in the announcement period either (three weeks). The announcement is made by the faculty office at the Faculty of Science, which is to have three working days at its disposal for processing. No matters are processed in the period between 22 December and 6 January.

### Examining committee’s deliberation

The examining committee is to convene and take a decision on the grade immediately following the public defence. The external reviewer (opponent) and the principal supervisor are to be at the disposal of the examining committee during the deliberation to answer questions, etc., but they are not to attend the committee’s decision-making process. Likewise, the chair of the public defence of the doctoral thesis is not to attend the decision-making stage. The examining committee appoints a chair among its members who is to ensure that the minutes of the

meeting are recorded in the form for this purpose and handed in to the faculty office, which then registers the grade in Ladok.

The present management regulations were approved by the dean after consultation with the presiding committee and the faculty's research programmes board. The previous document "Regulations on the registration of a public defence of a doctoral thesis, examining committee and external reviewer" (STYR 2016/85) hereby ceases to apply.

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