



INSTRUCTIONS TO PRE-EXAMINERS AND OPPONENTS OF DOCTORAL THESES

Degree Regulations 2015

Applies to doctoral theses entering the examination process after 1 August 2010

1 BACKGROUND

The approval of all doctoral theses proceeds in two stages:

- 1) the pre-examination process, and
- 2) the public defence of the thesis.

In Finland the manuscript has to be published in order to be publicly defended. The pre-examiners' statements are therefore recommendations for:

- a) permission to publish the manuscript, and
- b) permission to publicly defend the thesis.

At the public defence, the thesis is reviewed and critiqued by the opponent(s).

Permission to publish and publicly defend a thesis manuscript is granted by the Academic Council (AC) of Hanken. The AC also decides whether a thesis is accepted or rejected.

When a doctoral candidate submits a manuscript, the AC appoints at least two external experts (*pre-examiners*) to review it. Based on their statements, the AC determines whether or not to permit publication and public defence of the thesis. Once permission is granted, the AC appoints at least one expert as an opponent. After the defence, based on a written statement by the opponent, the AC decides whether to accept or reject the thesis.

There are two doctorates at Hanken: the Doctor of Science (Economics and Business Administration) and the Doctor of Philosophy.

2 REQUIREMENTS FOR A DOCTORAL THESIS

Through the thesis, the doctoral candidate should demonstrate the ability to carry out independent and critical scholarly work as well as the capability to independently generate new scientific knowledge.

According to the Finnish Government Decree on University Degrees and the Degree Regulations of Hanken School of Economics, a doctoral thesis can consist of either:

- An individual piece of research; or
- Several scholarly publications or manuscripts accepted for publication and a summary of them, in which the research problem, aims, methods and results are presented; or
- Other work satisfying corresponding scholarly criteria, i.e. several unpublished essays (manuscripts of the same scientific quality as if they were published or accepted for publication) and a summary tying the papers together, in which the research problem, aims, methods and results are presented.

Publications and essays can include joint papers, if they can be proven to contain an independent contribution by the candidate.

3 STAGES OF THE EXAMINATION PROCESS

3.1 The pre-examination process

The pre-examination process can be considered the most important part of the thesis examination process. The pre-examiners are expected to submit separate assessments that especially address the following questions (detailed in the assessment form):

- What is the scientific value added – the contribution – of the thesis work?
- Has the work been carried out and documented according to good scientific practice and principles of research ethics?
- If the work includes joint publications or essays, is the contribution of the doctoral candidate sufficient?

In their assessments, the pre-examiners are expected to take an explicit stance on:

- The relevance of the chosen problem area and scientific aim in relation to existing knowledge in the area,
- The comprehensiveness and completeness of the frame of reference in relation to the problem area and aim,
- The choice of concrete research questions, empirical data and analysis strategy,
- The presentation of the results achieved, given the chosen research approach,
- The discussion of what these results imply, given the scientific aim of the thesis – the scientific contribution.

In their assessments, the pre-examiners shall indicate whether or not permission to publish and defend the manuscript may be granted, by concluding with one of the following recommendations:

- a) The manuscript is acceptable.
- b) The manuscript is acceptable provided that the corrections mentioned in the assessment have been carried out. The supervision of the corrections is to be carried out by the thesis supervisor.
- c) The manuscript contains major shortcomings. When the problems mentioned in the assessment have been properly addressed the candidate should submit the manuscript to the pre-examiner for a new reading and assessment.
- d) The manuscript is not acceptable.

If the thesis is in the form of publications and a summary of them, the pre-examiners shall address both the publications in general and the summary in particular. They shall also comment on whether the publications form a coherent piece of research and whether the candidate's contribution to possible joint papers is to be considered sufficient.

If the thesis is in the form of essays (unpublished academic papers), the pre-examiners shall address both the individual essays and the summary. In addition to what has been stated above for a thesis consisting of publications, the pre-examiners shall pay particular attention to the scholarly quality of the essays (i.e. do they qualitatively measure up to manuscripts in reviewed academic journals).

The assessments are submitted electronically within two (2) months.

The candidate may comment on the pre-examiners' statements. The AC decides whether or not the manuscript is to be allowed to be publicly defended as a doctoral thesis.

3.2 Public defence of the thesis and the role of the opponent

When permission to defend the thesis has been granted, the candidate is allowed to publish the manuscript as a doctoral thesis. The AC appoints at least one opponent for the defence.

3.2.1 The public defence

The defence is public. Members of the academic community, collaborators, relatives, friends and other interested parties are welcome.

The public defence starts with a 20-minute *lectio praecursoria* delivered by the candidate, and aiming to explain his/her interest in the research question. It is not to be a summary of the work and the results.

After the *lectio*, the opponent (or one of the opponents if there are several) makes a short statement concerning the position and the scholarly contribution of the thesis within its field. Then the opponent briefly summarizes the work and the results, and gives a disposition for the examination.

After this, the opponent(s) question the doctoral candidate about the thesis, normally for 1,5-2 hours. The defence should be no longer than 6 hours in total; this includes a maximum of 4 hours for the opponent(s), with the rest of the time reserved for questions and comments from the audience.

At the end, the opponent(s) presents a final assessment in which the merits and the deficiencies of the work are evaluated, taking into account its scholarly novelty, the way the work has been carried out, its results, and their documentation. Normally the opponent(s) also assess the candidate's ability to defend his or her work at the public examination.

3.2.2 Written statement

After the public defence, the opponent submits an electronic statement on the thesis and the defence. This should contain a summary assessment of the thesis contents and of the defence, and may also include comments on issues that have emerged during the defence. Special attention should be paid to the assessment criteria used during the pre-examination (please see pt 3.1 above). The opponent should also assess the candidate's ability to orally communicate research results and respond to questions during the defence. The statement is concluded with a suggestion on whether to accept or fail the thesis. It should be delivered to the Academic Council within four weeks after the public defence.

If there is more than one opponent, they should preferably produce a joint statement.

The statement should be submitted within 1 week of the defence.

3.3 Approval of the thesis

The opponent's statement is then distributed to the doctoral candidate and the members of the Academic Council. The candidate has the right to comment on the statement before the AC decides whether to accept or reject the thesis.