Guidelines for PhD Faculty Opponents and Examination Committee Member for the Department of Geological Sciences, Stockholm University

Based on your expertise you have been asked to be part of a PhD defence at our department. We appreciate that this takes time and effort. To make the process a little smoother, below you will find an outline of the steps involved and some completing information to help you navigate this task.

Before the Defence

At **10 weeks before the intended defence** an application detailing the PhD candidate and their thesis title, opponent, examination committee, examination committee reserve/substitute as well as the chair of the PhD defence is sent to the Faculty of Science by the head of department[1]. A motivation for the selection of the opponent and the examination committee is included. This application is formally approved by the dean of the Section for Earth and Environmental Sciences.

At **9 weeks before the defence** you will be given a copy of the thesis. The thesis will consist of a kappa (or, directly translated, "a coat"), which is an overview and discussion of what has been achieved during the PhD project, as well as appended articles/manuscripts. The version you will receive is near complete, but not final. The candidate can still make adjustments to language, formatting, etc. The thesis will already have gone through an internal assessment by our head of subject. We ask the opponent to evaluate whether the thesis is of suitable quality to be defended by the student. An answer is expected within **2 weeks** after the thesis has been received. The evaluation committee will also be sent the thesis and have the opportunity to raise any major issues at this point. The individual papers should be of the quality to be accepted to an international, peer-reviewed journal after revisions. You do not need to provide any further feedback at this point but please note that *once the thesis is printed there is no opportunity to change the text* (i.e., no corrections are made) and on the day of the defence you will decide if the candidate may pass or fail. If for some reason the thesis is not considered suitable for defence, a new date for the defence will be negotiated. We would choose to postpone the defence rather than to proceed with an insufficient body of work leading to a candidate failing.

The thesis is finalized **3 weeks before the defence** at the “nailing” day. The printed thesis will be sent to you by post as well as electronically.

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[1] The opponent should be working outside Stockholm University and may not come from the same department. The examination committee should consist of three members as well as a reserve/substitute. These should all be working at different academic institutions. Of these four individuals at least two should be working outside Stockholm University and not more than one can come from the same institution as the PhD candidate. The opponent and the committee members should have docent competence or equivalent and not have any conflict of interest with the PhD candidate or their supervisor. Men and women should be represented on this committee. The combined expertise of the committee should be sufficient to evaluate the scientific content of the thesis.

At the Public Defence

The chair of the defence opens the proceedings. At this time the chair will present the PhD candidate, her/his thesis title, supervisor and co-supervisors. The chair will then introduce the opponent, the examination committee and quickly brief the audience on the day's procedure.

The Public Defence in Brief

1. The PhD candidate makes a 30 minute presentation
2. The opponent makes a 10-15 minute presentation putting the thesis into the context of the research field
3. The opponent and PhD candidate then have a scientific discussion about the thesis
4. The examination committee questions the PhD candidate
5. The audience has the opportunity to question the PhD candidate
6. The public defence is closed

The PhD candidate first has the opportunity to give any errata to their thesis.

The PhD candidate will then give a presentation of approximately 30-minutes on their thesis work.

The floor is then given to the opponent who is asked to place the thesis content in a broader scientific context. This could be by giving a short overview of the broader research field relevant to the PhD candidate's thesis work (10-15 minutes but can be longer). It may include a wider, more general or historical perspective about the field of study – normally from the angle of their specialisation. The aim of this presentation is to show where the PhD candidate's thesis advances the field of study.

The opponent and the PhD candidate then have centre stage (either sitting or standing), and engage in a discussion. While minor issues may be raised at this time (language, references, typos) the focus of the discussion should be on the scientific results. A positive atmosphere is welcomed where the PhD candidate is given the opportunity to defend their work. The opponent has often chosen some figures from the thesis and put these in a power point. At the end of the discussion it is common for the opponent to give their general impression of the work. This discussion generally runs to an hour but there is no official time limit.

When the opponent is satisfied, the floor is given to the examining committee who will ask additional questions. If there are outstanding matters, either textual clarifications, matters of science, general interest, etc., this is the time to query the candidate. This is normally 2-4 questions per committee member, not lasting much more than 10-15 minutes per member. This means that the public defence normally lasts 2 to 3 hours.

The floor is then open for questions from the public. Once these are satisfied the public defence is closed.

Committee Discussion
The second step in the process is that the committee members convene together with the opponent and the supervisors. This meeting is started by the chair of the defence but their role is to make sure that the examination committee appoints a chair of the examination committee after which time they leave.

The committee members have now the opportunity to ask questions to the supervisors and the opponent about the PhD candidate's work before taking their decision. The supervisor(s) and the opponent may participate in the discussions prior to the decision. However, the supervisor(s) must leave the room before the examining committee decides on a *pass* or *fail*. The examining committee will report their decision on the faculty's *Protocol for dissertation defence at Stockholm University* document. Each member of the committee ***must*** sign this document. It is returned to the chair of the defence who signs it and gives it to the Director of PhD Studies who mails it into the faculty.

Reimbursement
The Department will reimburse your travel costs. We will reimburse 2 nights in a hotel and economy class flights. You are expected to arrive the day before the exam. We encourage rail travel within Europe and will cover all extra costs that are entailed. You would normally depart the next day. Please submit the provided reimbursement forms (there are two forms if you are coming from abroad) along with ***original*** receipts.

If you are not a Swedish resident you must register with the Swedish tax authority. You will need to fill in an application regarding SINK (special income tax for non-residents). Stockholm University needs this for all foreign persons who receive money from the university, no matter if it is for salary or expenses. Please use the link below and press "ansök om särksild inkomstskatt" and follow the instructions. As soon as you get your SINK-approval please inform our administrator Johanna Stub (johanna.stub@geo.su.se) and she will help you get your reimbursement. Applying for this at Skatteverket can take up to 8 weeks.

https://skatteverket.se/servicelankar/otherlanguages/inenglishengelska/individualsandemployees/newinswedenandwillbeemployedhere/applicationforspecialincometaxfornonresidents.4.109dcbe71721adafd251ba9.html

Completing details for this process:

SU organization number: 202100-3062

Address:
Institutionen för geologiska vetenskaper
Svante Arrhenius väg 8
114 18 Stockholm
Sweden

Some Useful Translations

- Defence - *Disputation*
- Application for defence - *Disputationsblankett*
- PhD candidate - *Respondent*
- Opponent - *Fakultetsopponent*
- Examination committee - *Betygsnämnd*
- Examination committee reserve member - *Suppleant i betygsnämnd*
- Chair of the PhD defence - *Ordförande vid disputation*
- Chair of the examination committee - *Ordförande i betygsnämnd*
- Head of subject – *Ämnesansvarig*
- Nailing – *Spikning*
- Pass – *Godkänd*
- Fail – *Underkänd*
- Protocol for dissertation defence at Stockholm University - *Protokoll för disputation vid Stockholms universitet*