



# Guidelines for the evaluation of PhD thesis at the School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences

(Approved by the Schools Research Committee on 2. December 2020)

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## 1 Regulations

The evaluation of PhD thesis submitted at School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences is governed by:

- the [Regulations for the Doctor Philosophiae \(PhD\) degree at NMBU](#). (Entry into force 01.07.2020).
- the [Supplementary provisions to NMBU's Regulations for the degree of Philosophiae Doctor \(PhD\) for the School of Economics and Business \(HH\)](#). (Approved by the board of HH, 16. June 2020.)

The regulations shall be made available to all those who participate in the evaluation of PhD thesis at School of Economics and Business, Norwegian University of Life Sciences.

These guidelines are derived from and formulated within the framework of the regulations, but they focus in particular on the evaluation process and provide a supplementary reference with regard to the standards and procedures assumed to be common to all Norwegian PhD degrees, as found in the national guidelines:

- [Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates for Norwegian Doctoral Degrees, Recommended by the Norwegian Association of Higher Education Institutions](#), 23 March 2007

## 2 The academic thesis (§10)

### 2.1 Thesis requirements (§10-1)

The thesis must be an independent research work or research and development work that meets international standards with respect to academic level, ethical requirements, and methods within the field.

The thesis must contribute to the development of new scholarly knowledge and be of sufficiently high academic quality to merit publication as part of the literature in the field, or in an appropriate format as part of the research-based knowledge development in the field.

The thesis may consist of a monograph or a compilation of several pieces of work in the form of scholarly manuscripts and/or articles. If the thesis consists of several part-works, the thesis must contain an introductory chapter ('kappe') which from an overall perspective, summarises and collates the research questions and conclusions presented in them. The PhD candidate must be the sole author of this introductory chapter.

If the thesis consists of several scholarly works that have been produced in cooperation with other coauthors, the PhD candidate should normally be the main or first author of at least half the manuscripts/articles. The Vancouver Convention's standards for co-authorship must be complied with. Upon submission of the thesis, each scholarly work with several co-authors must be accompanied by a declaration describing the PhD candidates' contribution and the contributions of each co-author. The declaration must be signed by both the PhD candidate and the co-authors. The PhD candidate is responsible for obtaining such declarations of coauthorship.



The thesis must be written in either English or Norwegian. In both cases, the thesis must contain a brief abstract in English and a brief abstract in Norwegian.

HH supplementary provisions recommends an introductory chapter of 6-9000 words. Furthermore, the HH supplementary provisions says the PhD candidate must normally be the sole author of at least one article in the thesis. All articles must, as a minimum requirement, be of the level required of a first submission of a manuscript to a journal, and at least half of the articles should have been submitted to well-respected journals before applying for evaluation. The PhD candidate's relative overall contribution should normally be about 250% according to the co-authorship declarations. A thesis containing published articles of a high quality can be accepted somewhat below this norm, but no less than 200%.

### 3 The work of the evaluation committee (§14)

#### 3.1 General provisions (§14-1, national guidelines)

The committee's coordinator must inform external members of the evaluation committee about NMBU's PhD Regulations and the current guidelines for evaluation of doctoral degrees. From the committee is appointed until the doctoral degree exam has been completed, there must be no contact between supervisors and the committee concerning the PhD candidate or the PhD candidate's work.

The Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates for Norwegian Doctoral Degrees say that the chairperson of the committee is responsible for the organisation of the committee's work, including ensuring satisfactory progress from the start and observing the deadline set for the completion of the committee's work. The chairperson is responsible for coordinating the compilation of the committee's report on the thesis and for distributing tasks among the committee members in connection with the public defence.

#### 3.2 Evaluation of the thesis (§14-2, national guidelines)

When evaluating the thesis, particular emphasis must be placed on whether the thesis meets the requirements set out in Section 10. An overall assessment must be made, and the thesis's strengths and weaknesses considered, including an evaluation of whether the material and methods are appropriate in relation to the questions raised in the thesis, and whether the arguments and conclusions presented are tenable.

The evaluation committee may request to look into the source material used by the PhD candidate, and also request supplementary information for the purposes of elaboration and clarification.

Based on the submitted thesis and any additional material, the evaluation committee can recommend the Faculty to permit minor revisions before the final recommendation is made. In its preliminary recommendation, the committee must provide a specified written list of what the candidate needs to revise. If the Faculty permits such revisions, the PhD candidate will be given a deadline normally not longer than three months to revise the thesis



If the committee finds that fundamental changes with respect to theories, hypotheses, material or methods are necessary before the thesis can be recommended for public defence, the committee must submit a recommendation that the thesis is found not to be worthy of a public defence for the PhD degree.

The Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates for Norwegian Doctoral Degrees say that the PhD candidate must satisfy the same minimum requirements for expertise as a researcher – expressed through requirements related to the formulation of research questions, precision and logical stringency, originality, mastery of relevant methods of analysis and consideration of their potentialities and limitations, as well as familiarity with, understanding of and a well-considered perspective on other research in the field.

Furthermore, the Guidelines for the Evaluation of Candidates for Norwegian Doctoral Degrees say that when evaluating the thesis, focus shall be placed on whether the thesis is an independent, cohesive scientific work of high academic merit as regards the formulation of research questions, methodology, theoretical and empirical foundation, documentation, treatment of the literature and form of presentation. Of particular importance is an evaluation of whether the material and methods used are suitable for addressing the questions posed in the thesis and whether the arguments and conclusions presented are tenable. The thesis shall generate new academic knowledge and be of sufficiently high quality that it could be published as part of the academic literature in the field.

### 3.3 The evaluation committee's recommendation (§14-3)

The committee must submit a joint reasoned recommendation to the Faculty on whether the thesis is worthy of a public defence for the doctoral degree. All parts of the submitted or presented documentation must be reviewed on the basis of the criteria in §10. The recommendation should be written in a discussion-based form and it should end with a clear conclusion that the committee:

- a) recommends that the thesis be approved for public defence, or
- b) recommends that the Faculty permits minor revisions of the thesis before the final recommendation is made, or
- c) recommends that the thesis not be approved for public defence (rejected).

In its recommendation, the evaluation committee must state their judgement on the level of the thesis in relation to the international standard in the field.

Any disagreement between the committee members must be mentioned in the recommendation, and individual statements, if any, must be enclosed with the recommendation.

### 3.4 Schedule for evaluation (§14-2, §14-3, §15-3)

The committee's recommendation must be available within three months of the committee receiving all parts of the thesis for evaluation, and no later than 25 working days before the planned public defence.

If the Faculty permits minor revisions of the thesis, a new deadline will apply from the date on which the thesis is re-submitted. The PhD candidate will be given a deadline normally not longer than three



months to revise the thesis. The PhD candidate cannot appeal decisions made by the Faculty pursuant to this provision. The evaluation committee is to be given a deadline of up to six weeks from they receive the revised thesis until they submit their final recommendation.

A PhD thesis that has been rejected by the Faculty may be revised and submitted for evaluation in a new version at the earliest six months and the latest two years after the Faculty made its decision to reject the thesis.

The Faculty communicates the evaluation committee's recommendation to the PhD candidate and the main supervisor. The PhD candidate is to be given a deadline of 10 working days to submit written comments on the recommendation. If the PhD candidate does not wish to submit comments, he/she must inform the Faculty about this as soon as possible. If the PhD candidate's comments have a bearing on the question of whether the thesis can be approved, the comments should be presented to the evaluation committee before the Faculty makes a decision on the matter.

### 3.5 Correction of formal errors in the thesis (§14-4)

A thesis will be evaluated exactly as it is submitted and cannot be changed, with exception of the minor revisions described above, or withdrawn before a final decision is made on whether it is worthy of a public defence for the PhD degree.

The PhD candidate can apply once to the Faculty for permission to correct formal errors (errata) in the approved thesis to be made public. The application must include an errata list, showing the corrections the candidate wishes to make to the thesis. The deadline to apply to correct formal errors is one week after the candidate has received the evaluation committee's recommendation.

## 4 The doctoral exam – trial lecture and public defence (§17)

### 4.1 Trial lecture (§17-1)

After the thesis has been submitted and before the public defence, the PhD candidate must give a trial lecture on a specified topic. This is an independent part of the doctoral exam. The purpose of the trial lecture is to test the PhD candidate's ability to acquire knowledge over and above the topic of the thesis, and the ability to convey this knowledge in a lecture setting. The lecture should last for 45 minutes. The academic level of the lecture must be suited to master's degree students.

The title of the trial lecture is to be decided by the evaluation committee and communicated to the PhD candidate 10 working days before the lecture takes place. The topic of the lecture should not be directly linked to the specific topic of the thesis, but rather focus on theoretical, methodical or empirical topics related to the work presented in the thesis.

The trial lecture must be held in English or Norwegian unless another language is approved.

The trial lecture is held in connection with the public defence, and the evaluation committee assesses the trial lecture and decides whether it merit's a pass. The trial lecture must be passed before the public defence of the thesis may take place.



If the committee decides that the trial lecture does not merit a pass, the grounds for the decision must be stated. In such case, the PhD candidate can give a new trial lecture on a new topic, no earlier than 14 days and no later than six months after the first attempt. Only one additional attempt is allowed.

#### 4.2 Public defence of the thesis (disputation) (§17-2)

The public defence of the thesis must take place within two months of the Faculty having approved it for public defence. The time and place of the public defence must be announced at least 10 working days in advance, together with information about how the thesis has been made public. The public defence must as a main rule be held at NMBU. The same committee that evaluated the thesis must also assess the public defence. The public defence is to be held in the language of the thesis unless the Faculty has approved another language. There must be two ordinary opponents who both are members of the evaluation committee.

The public defence is chaired by the Dean or a person appointed by the Dean. The chairperson gives a brief account of the submission and evaluation of the thesis and of the assessment of the trial lecture. The PhD candidate will then explain the purpose and results of the doctoral work.

The public defence is to be a scholarly discussion between the opponents and the PhD candidate on the formulation of research questions, the methodological, empirical and theoretical basis of the thesis, and the documentation and form of presentation. Particular emphasis should be placed on testing the tenability of important conclusions drawn by the PhD candidate in the thesis. The questions the opponents choose to pursue need not be limited to those discussed in the committee's statement on the thesis. After both opponents have concluded their questioning and the PhD candidate have been given the opportunity to defend the thesis, members of the audience must be given the opportunity to comment *ex auditorio*. The chairperson concludes the public defence.

The evaluation committee submits a reasoned recommendation to the Faculty in which the committee describes how it has assessed the defence of the thesis. The report must conclude on the question of whether the public defence is assessed as approved or not approved.

## 5 Transitional provisions (§ 25)

Any person who, when the NMBU PhD regulations enter into force, has been admitted to a PhD programme in accordance with the [Regulations of 15 May 2014 for the Philosophiae Doctor degree \(PhD\)](#) at the Norwegian University of Life Sciences, will retain the rights set out therein if this is to the benefit of the person concerned.