# **Procedures for trial lecture and public defence of the PhD thesis**

# When the required coursework and the doctoral thesis are approved, the PhD candidate must pass the doctoral degree examination before a PhD degree can be conferred on the candidate. The doctoral degree examination consists of a trial lecture (of an assigned topic) and a public defence of the thesis. The committee must be present to evaluate the trial lecture and the public defence.

 **Both the trial lecture and the public defence must be approved before the PhD degree can be conferred on the PhD candidate.**

Preparation for the trial lecture and the public defence
On the actual day of the public defence, the PhD candidate, evaluation committee and the chair of the public defence should meet approximately half an hour before the proceedings start. This time will be used to review how the trial lecture and the public defence will be organised. It is recommended that the candidate should in due time visit the room where the trial lecture and the public defence are to be held, to make sure that all the equipment is working as it should.

The trial lecture
The objective of the trial lecture is to enable the candidate to demonstrate his/her ability to acquire knowledge above and beyond the topic of the thesis, and to communicate this knowledge in a lecture situation. The topic will therefore not have links to the central topic of the thesis. The lecture will last 45 minutes in the language agreed with the faculty beforehand (usually in English). The academic level of the lecture must be suited to master degree students or students in the final phase of a five-year programme of professional study.

The topic of the trial lecture (the assigned topic) is decided by the evaluation committee and is sent to the candidate by email 10 working days before the date of the trial lecture (and public defence). After receiving the assigned topic, the candidate preferably should discuss the topic with the supervisors or others in the academic community; how the title should be understood and how the lecture should be delimited and organised.

The trial lecture is normally held on the same day as the public defence of the thesis. The assessment of the trial lecture is made by the evaluation committee and from the following criterias:

* The PhD candidate’s choice of background material / literature
* Structure of the trial lecture
* Comprehension and maturity
* Presentation techniques’ skills, inclusive use of visual aids
* The time frame of 45 minutes (the trial lecture must not be too short or too long)

Deviations from these moments could mean that the trial lecture does not reach approval.

**If the trial lecture is not approved by the evaluation committee:**

If the evaluation committee does not recommend the trial lecture to be approved, the public defence cannot be conducted. The candidate must then hold a new trial lecture on a new topic (cf. PhD regulations Section 19-2).

The public defence / the disputation
The candidate must defend his/her work in a public disputation. To pass the doctoral exam, the public defence must be recommended approved by the evaluation committee.

The defence shall comprise an academic discussion between opponents and the candidate on the formulation of the research questions, the methodological, theoretical and empirical basis, the documen­tation and form of presentation. The opponents place special emphasis on testing whether important conclusions drawn by the candidate in his/her research work are tenable. The research questions which the opponents choose to pursue need not be limited to those discussed in the commit­tee’s report on the thesis. The candidate may be asked questions on the entire thesis, from both the Introductory chapter (in Norwegian: “sammenfatningen” or “kappen”) and the various articles. The third member of the committee (the NMBU coordinator) does not usually take an active role in the defence.

The candidate should study the committee’s recommendation concerning the PhD thesis, carefully before the defence. In addition to giving a general statement as to whether they judge the thesis as worthy of defence, the committee normally comments on its strengths and weaknesses. These issues are extremely relevant to the defence.

Procedures for the public defence / the disputation
The chair of the defence, the committee members and the candidate enter the room in a procession. The chair enters the podium as the others sit down. The chair opens the defence and provides information about the candidate, the PhD thesis submission and evaluation, the assessment of the trial lecture, and about the public defence.

The candidate enters and starts with a general introductory presentation of the work behind the thesis, its conclusions and importance. This presentation lasts approximately 30 minutes.

When the candidate has finished the presentation, the opponents question the candidate. Usually the first opponent starts the questioning, and the second opponent gives the final questioning.

Others present who would like to participate in the discussion must notify the chair during the disputation, before the second opponent starts the questioning. Each opponent is expected to spend approximately one hour questioning the candidate, but there is quite a large variation in the duration of defence proceedings. Normally the entire ceremony lasts between two and three hours. How first and second opponent distribute their tasks may vary.

Once the last opponent has sat down, the candidate is given the opportunity to express his/her thanks. The chair, the committee and the candidate then leave the room in a procession.

PhD celebration dinner
On the evening of the day of disputation the candidate may have an event (i.e. arrange a dinner) to which the chair of the defence, the evaluation committee and supervisors are invited. In addition the candidate’s family, friends and colleagues will be invited. Costs from such an event are tax-deductible. More information are to be found on [the Norwegian Tax Administration web pages](http://www.skatteetaten.no/no/Person/Selvangivelse/Fradrag/Andre-fradrag/Fradrag-for-kostnader-til-doktorgrad/).