

Procedure for the public defence of a doctoral thesis at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

1. Examination is carried out by an independent examining committee in conjunction with the public defence of the doctoral thesis for the degree of doctor. In the light of the degree outcomes, the examining committee present at the thesis defence must assess the thesis and the author's oral defence of the it.
2. If a member of the examining committee or the external reviewer (the 'opponent'), after receiving the thesis, have severe considerations about the quality of the thesis, he/she must contact the chair no later than one week before the defence. SLU thesis criteria are regulated in the *Guidelines for third-cycle (doctoral) education 2015* see www.slu.se
3. The opponent must facilitate the examining committee's assessment by engaging in discussion with the author of the thesis (the 'respondent').
4. The opponent is not expected to deliver written comments, statements etc.
5. Formal dress is not (or only exceptionally) used by the opponent, nor by the respondent. The defence is conducted in the presence of an audience, often consisting of up to 30–40 persons.
6. The audience is of a very mixed background, i.e. it consists both of academic colleagues and family, relatives and friends of the respondent.
7. The proceedings are conducted by a chairperson, who starts by reading the title of the thesis and by declaring that the thesis has been accepted for official defence. The chair also introduces the opponent, the respondent and the examining committee (3 or 5 members, selected by the faculty board). The chair then asks the respondent for a short comment, e.g. regarding any corrections of the text; these are usually presented on an errata list.
8. The chair can then give the floor to the respondent. The respondent gives a 15–30 minutes presentation/summary of the thesis.
9. Thereafter the chair gives the floor to the opponent. The opponent may start with a general presentation of the subject of the thesis, and thereafter point out the main achievements of the thesis, including comments regarding the significance of the results in relation to previous work. This usually requires 15–30 minutes, longer if necessary. After completing this part, the opponent asks the respondent whether he/she has anything to add.

10. The opponent then initiates a more detailed discussion of the scientific content of the thesis with the respondent. This discussion should preferably not concern minor errors in the text etc., but instead issues such as the respondent's conception of the field studied, the experimental techniques employed, possible pitfalls, potential future developments etc. The opponent should feel free to select various aspects for discussion entirely at his/her own discretion. However, all issues raised should be of relevance to the thesis. The opponent as well as the respondent may use PP presentations of tables or figures during the discussions. This phase of the proceedings, during which the two discussants tend to ignore the audience, usually 1-2 hours or more. The opponent should stress the virtues as well as the weaknesses of the work.
11. After completion of the debate the opponent ends with a few (kind) remarks on a more personal note, usually involving some kind of congratulation; the respondent answers by thanking the opponent for the examination.
12. The chairman then invites the examining committee to take part in the discussion, as well as anyone in the audience who wishes to raise additional problems or questions. The opponent may again participate at this point. After this additional discussion the chairman ends the proceedings.
13. Following this the examining committee has a closed meeting. The opponent is also present, and may give a more informal opinion of the thesis, along with the supervisors for the respondent. The supervisors usually comment on the role of the respondent in the project, the extent of independent work etc. Additional questions regarding the thesis may be raised. Before the examining committee formally decides on whether or not to approve the thesis and the oral examination, the opponent and supervisors must leave the meeting.