

PhD Lunch Seminar: The Final Year

How long should I save for writing the kappa?

- Start as early as possible:
 - Start with simple things like an introduction or headings/general arrangement, which paper comes first, what are the links between them, the front page, acknowledgements, etc.
 - Prepare a Kappa file early on (or today, if you haven't already) and add things already as they come up throughout your PhD.
 - **TIP:** Don't simply delete parts of manuscript drafts that you are not including in the final manuscript version; instead, add these removed pieces/thoughts and add them into the kappa file. You will be happy to find it when you start writing your kappa!
- At least 6 months before it needs to be submitted for printing, start to think about the basics.
- Focussed writing should take at least 3 months (not recommended to try to complete it in less time, even if it is theoretically possible).
- Everything depends also on how much time your supervisors need to give you feedback. Consider how long it takes your supervisors to normally provide feedback on other writing and plan your time accordingly.
- Plan time for proofreading.
- Make deadlines for yourself with the different parts of the kappa
- Send a draft of your kappa, clearly stating that it's a draft and ask for general comments; it is good to know if you are going in the right direction from an early stage.
- There are many things to fix before sending in the thesis to print that you couldn't imagine think about the time needed. Fix the language, the format...
- Remember, even once printed, you can make changes to your thesis!

How do I write the kappa?

- Find the story that links your papers; don't focus on each paper separately but discuss them all together from a broader perspective.
- Look at the kappa of other theses, even if they look very different.
- Find the best time and the best place to write that works for YOU (maybe early in the morning, late in the evening, on weekends, at the office, in the country house...).

How to prepare for the defence?

- Be aware of who is in committee (research them and their work) and prepare for questions.
- Take some weeks of break after submitting the thesis for printing; it is important to recover after periods of high stress.
- Finish the presentation at least 2 weeks before so you have time to improve.
- Make a checklist of things to do before the defence.
- You will spend time on admin-related tasks.

- You can start to prepare some questions if that helps you to cope with stress, but be aware that they questions may not come up at the actual defence.
- Practice the discussion part with your supervisors (e.g., have them ask questions about your work as if they were on the examining committee; this allows you to both practice answering questions and receive immediate feedback on your answers).
- Work a bit on the manuscripts you still have to submit.
- Go through the comments of the reviewers of your paper and how you handled them at the time; this may give you an idea of potential lines of questioning that could come up.
- **TIP** for Rehearsal: keep an excel sheet for your rehearsals, noting the time used in each rehearsal, as well as how that rehearsal made you feel. You will notice that the more you practice, the faster the time becomes and the better you feel about the presentation.
- Book IT support some weeks ahead of your defence.
- Be aware that defending directly after summer, for example, may impact your ability to receive feedback from supervisors on your kappa, as well as potentially impact summer vacation plans.

What to do the last year?

- It is not recommended to go abroad for long periods of time (e.g., for a 6 month study visit) during the last 12 months; instead, try to plan study/research visits in the time after your halftime, but before your final year.
- It's doable to write 2 papers in the last year, but plan those papers in advance.
- Plan your dissertation party early, as well as the guest list; if possible, find someone to arrange it for you, to reduce the amount of things you need to stress over leading up to your defence.
- Think that a year before the defence is actually only 9 months, as you need to finish writing your kappa and submit it for printing 2.5-3 months before your defence.
- Make a skeleton of your thesis a year before.
- It's good to have an idea of what to do after your PhD. Ask your supervisor if you can work a bit more after your PhD so you don't have to stress for the after, while you're in the final stage of your PhD studies. Non-EU people apply for a job beforehand so you keep the visa.
- Plan for delays, they can (and likely will) happen.
- Use this tool developed by Faruk Dube to plan the last year: <https://phdplanner.com/>
- Look at the deadlines (e.g., for sending your thesis in for printing) provided on the SLU website:
<https://internt.slu.se/globalassets/mw/utb/forskarutbildningdocent/blanketter/fakultetsblanketter/nj-fak/fore-2013/checklistphdthesis09.pdf>
- Don't forget to ask for ISBN number before printing your thesis!

What to do on D-day?

- You can read your thesis the night before; either you will be even more prepared or you will fall asleep.
- On that note, make sure you try to get a good night of sleep the night before!

- Meet committee and opponents before the defence. E.g., for a seminar, fika, dinner in the day or two prior.
- On D-day, be there on time.
- Remember: If you were allowed to defend it is because you will pass.
- Remember: Everyone is on your side, except the committee, but they are likely also nervous.