

## Procedure for the Oral Defence of Doctoral Dissertations at the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences

1. Only one examiner (referred to as 'the Opponent' or external examiner) is required for the oral defence of the dissertation. Formal dress is not (or only exceptionally) used by the Opponent, nor by 'the Respondent' defending the thesis. The defence is conducted in the presence of an audience, often consisting of up to 30-40 persons.
2. The proceedings are conducted by a Chairman, who starts by reading the title of the thesis and by declaring that the thesis has been accepted for official defence. The Chairman also introduces the Opponent, the Respondent and the Evaluation Committee (3 or 5 members, selected by the Faculty Board). The Chairman then asks the Respondent for a short comment eg regarding any corrections of the text; these are usually presented on an Errata List.
3. The chairman can then give the floor to the Opponent who opens the examination by presenting the topic and the main achievements of the thesis, including comments regarding the significance of the results in relation to previous work. It should be kept in mind at this stage that the audience is of a very mixed background. This exposé usually requires 15-30 minutes, longer if necessary. After completing this part the Opponent asks the Respondent whether he/she has anything to add. Alternatively, after presenting the errata list, the Respondent gives a 15-30 minutes presentation/summary of the thesis.
4. The Opponent then initiates a more detailed discussion of the scientific content of the thesis with the Respondent. This discussion should preferably not be concerned with minor errors in the text etc, but instead with 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 slides or overhead transparencies of tables or figures during the discussions. This phase of the proceedings, during which the two discussants tend to ignore the audience, usually takes one to two hours

or even more. The Opponent should stress the virtues as well as the weaknesses of the work.

5. 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.
6. The Chairman then invites the Evaluation 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.
7. Following this the Evaluation 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. The Evaluation Committee then formally decides on whether or not to accept the dissertation.