

Guidelines for the writing of PhD recommendations at the PhD School of Business and Social Sciences

A PhD recommendation consists of the written resumé of the work carried out by an assessment committee on a submitted PhD thesis. These guidelines recapitulate some of the rules laid down by the PhD Order and the supplementary regulations of the PhD School regarding the PhD recommendation and make suggestions as to the form that such a recommendation might take.

Preparing the recommendation is the work of the committee as a whole, but the chairperson of the assessment committee coordinates the writing process and bears the primary responsibility for compliance with deadlines and other formalities. The chairperson should introduce the members of the committee to Danish rules for the PhD course and PhD degree including rules governing the defence. At the same time committee members receive written information about these from the PhD School. Furthermore, the chairperson should ensure that the principal supervisor is involved in the work of the committee from the start. The chairperson is responsible for seeing that the principal supervisor is informed about the preliminary assessment of the thesis. The principal supervisor participates in the committee without voting rights but should have the opportunity to comment on the preliminary assessment to clear up any misunderstandings there might be prior to the assessment being sent to the PhD School.

The preliminary assessment and the final recommendation

The committee should prepare two documents, a preliminary assessment and a final recommendation.

The preliminary assessment

The assessment committee shall complete its preliminary assessment no later than two months (the month of July is not counted in this period) after the submission of the thesis. The target group for the preliminary assessment is the author, who should be able to use the assessment in preparing for the oral defence (or if the assessment is negative in any reworking of the thesis), and the Head of PhD School, who ensures that the assessment is as it should be both as regards formalities and content.

Each member of the assessment committee is expected to draft substantial comments on the PhD thesis (minimum two pages). The chairperson is responsible for condensing the written contributions for the assessment and for ensuring the quality of its writing so that it stands as a uniform text with clear links between premises and conclusions. The language used should be sober, factual and objective. The assessment should state whether the thesis in its present form is eligible to form the basis for the award of a PhD degree. The assessment should be reasoned and take the form of an independent document, briefly presenting the theme and structure of the thesis and indicating its strengths and weaknesses. The premises that form the basis for the assessment must be made clear. The assessment should lead to a conclusion, which should be consistent with the assessment's premises, and with the earlier exposition of the thesis. This exposition should have a sufficient degree of detail, including an explicit description of the thesis' scientific contribution and, in cases where the thesis is in part co-authored, an explicit description and assessment of the level of the PhD student's own contribution. The assessment should provide sufficient detail and should be sufficiently clear and comprehensive so that even lay readers can follow the thought processes from premise to conclusion.

The final recommendation

Immediately after the oral defence, the assessment committee prepares its final recommendation. Following a satisfactorily completed defence, the final recommendation may take the form of an addendum to the preliminary assessment, and the PhD School's [final assessment form](#) can be used. The chairperson's responsibility for the form of the final recommendation is comparable to that for the preliminary assessment.

If aspects of the thesis are revealed during the defence that give the committee cause to alter their description and assessment of it as given in the preliminary assessment, the final recommendation should be revised accordingly. In the event of disagreement, the recommendation will be decided by majority vote.

The target group for the final recommendation is the author and the Academic Council awarding the PhD degree. In addition, the author will often attach the final recommendation to future job application, and the final recommendation should therefore be composed with this in mind.

The final recommendation must be signed by all three members of the assessment committee. The chairperson is responsible for gathering signatures from the two external assessors.

The relationship between the two assessments

The preliminary assessment should, therefore, be composed in such a way as to allow the rapid preparation of the final recommendation. Typically, this could take the form of an endorsement of the preliminary assessment of satisfactorily completed defence and recommendation for award of the PhD degree.

Formalities

If all members of the assessment committee are Danish or read Danish, the recommendation is prepared in Danish. If preferred, however, the recommendation can be written in English. If one committee member does not read Danish, the recommendation must be prepared in English. The committee is responsible for ensuring the linguistic quality of the text of their recommendation.

Signatures

If there is unanimity, the *preliminary* assessment can be signed by the chairperson of the committee on behalf of the others. Name, title and signature must be inserted at the end of the recommendation. If the committee judges that the thesis must be submitted in a revised form, the recommendation must be signed by all three members.

The *final* recommendation must be signed by all members of the committee.

Content and structure of the recommendation

Heading

This gives the author's name and the full title of the thesis. The text should indicate that this is a PhD thesis.

First section

Here the make-up of the assessment committee is presented: Names, titles, home institutions (including countries for foreign members). It also states that the principal supervisor has participated in the work of the assessment committee without voting rights. If the thesis has been submitted without prior enrolment as PhD student according to § 15, para. 2 of the PhD Order, this should also be noted here.

Second section

Here an account is given of the form of the thesis (monograph, Danish or English abstract, attachments etc.) and of its length (number of pages without attachments and number of pages for attachments).

Third section – the assessment itself

The assessment should include a summary of the thesis' research question, its theoretical basis and sources and its structure. This should be followed by the critical assessment itself, and this should be written in such a way that the relation between strengths and weaknesses are made so clear that the conclusion seems well-founded.

Fourth section – the preliminary assessment

This presents the conclusion of the committee as to whether the thesis in its current form is suitable for defence. It should be clear whether the recommendation is made unanimously or whether there are divided opinions, and if so which members of the committee adopt which positions. The date for the defence is given and the subject of the lecture, if relevant.

If the committee judges that the thesis does not have qualities that make it suitable for an oral defence, the preliminary assessment should be able to provide the basis for the Dean's decision as to whether the thesis can be submitted again in a revised form within the timeframe of no less than three months. The committee makes a recommendation regarding the number of months of revision it judges necessary. If the committee recommends a revision of the thesis, the recommendation must be signed by all three members of the assessment committee.

The chairperson submits the recommendations to the PhD School Secretariat, e-mail: phdsek@sam.sdu.dk

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