**University of Southern Denmark**

**The Faculty of Humanities**

**October 2013**

**Guidelines for writing PhD recommendations**

A PhD assessment constitutes the written summary of an assessment committee’s work on a PhD submission. These written guidelines repeat some of the rules set for PhD assessments by the PhD ministerial order and by the faculty’s general rules of practice and it provides suggestions as to the form that this recommendation should take.

Preparation of the assessment is the responsibility of the whole committee, but the chair of the assessment committee coordinates its writing and is primarily responsible for ensuring that deadlines and other formal features are complied with.

The chair should introduce Danish rules for the PhD study and PhD degree to the members of the committee and ensure that the principle supervisor and any other supervisors for the thesis are involved in the work of the committee from the start, but without voting rights.

**The preliminary and the final assessment**

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

*The preliminary assessment*

The assessment committee should prepare a preliminary assessment of the thesis no later than two months after its submission. The target group for the preliminary assessment is made up of the author, who should be able to use the text in preparing for the oral defence (or, if the assessment is negative, to make any necessary changes to the thesis), and the faculty (the Dean’s office), which makes sure that the formalities and the content of the assessment are in order.

The assessment should indicate whether the thesis in its current form constitutes a suitable basis for an oral defence. The assessment must be substantiated and must take the form of an independent document with a brief presentation of the theme and structure of the thesis, while also providing an account of its strengths and weaknesses. It must clearly present the premises that form the basis for the committee’s assessment. The assessment should be suitable detailed, clear and comprehensive, so that even those without the relevant academic background can follow the thought processes from premises to conclusion. The date for the oral defence should be included.

*The final recommendation*

The assessment committee prepares its final recommendation as soon as possible after the oral defence. After a satisfactorily completed defence, the final recommendation may take the form of an addendum to the preliminary assessment. For example, *Final assessment: At the public defence of (date) the PhD candidate has provided evidence that the requirements of the ministerial order §3 have been fulfilled, and the assessment committee recommends that a PhD degree should be awarded*.

If, during the defence, aspects of the thesis are revealed that give the committee reason to alter the description and judgement given in their preliminary assessment, the final assessment should be adjusted to take account of such changes.

In the event that the assessment is not unanimous, it should be decided by majority vote.

The target group for the final assessment is made up of the author and the Academic Council, which awards the PhD degree. In addition, the author will presumably include it in future job applications.

*The relationship between the two assessments*

The preliminary assessment should, therefore, take a form that enables the rapid preparation of a final assessment. Endorsement of the preliminary assessment of satisfactorily completed defence and assessment for award of the degree.

**Formal considerations**

*Language*

If all members of the committee are Danish or can read Danish, the assessment is written in Danish. The assessment can, however, also be written in English, if this is preferred. It is the responsibility of the committee to ensure the linguistic quality of the text of the assessment.

*Signatures*

The preliminary assessment can, if so agreed, be signed by the chair of the assessment committee on behalf of the committee. The final assessment is signed by all members of the committee.

*Length*

The final assessment should be instructive, 5-10 pages of 2,400 elements (including characters and spaces).

*Layout*

The assessment is written on official letterhead paper, as a general rule that of the institution in which the chair is appointed. If the chair is from the University of Southern Denmark, SDU’s official letterhead should be used. The assessment should be paginated, and the final page of the assessment must contain text in addition to the names and signatures of the members of the committee.

**The structure and content of the assessment**

*Heading*

This should present the name of the author and the full title of the thesis. It should be clear from the text that it is a PhD thesis.

*The first section*

This should present the composition of the assessment committee: names, titles, institutional base (including country in the case of foreign members). The name of the chair of the committee should be given.

It should also be stated here who was the principle supervisor (name, title, institutional base) and that the principle supervisor (and any other supervisors) has participated in the work of the assessment committee without voting rights. In the event that the thesis has been submitted without the candidate having been registered as a PhD student (ministerial order §15, para 2), this should also be stated.

*The second section*

This provides an account of the form (monograph or articles, Danish or English summary, appendices etc.) and its length (number of pages excluding appendices, but with page counts for these).

*The third section – the assessment itself*

The recommendation should include a brief summary of the issue(s) covered by the thesis, of the theory and sources it is based upon, and of its structure. This is followed by the actual critical judgement, which should be formulated in such a way that the relationship between strengths and weaknesses is delineated so clearly that the conclusion can be seen to be substantiated.

*The fourth section – the preliminary assessment*

The committee’s conclusion regarding the extent to which the thesis in its current form constitutes a suitable basis for an oral defence. The date of the oral defence is included.

If, however, the committee judges that the thesis does not show the necessary quality to make it a suitable basis for an oral defence, the preliminary assessment should be able to provide the basis for the Dean’s decision that the thesis should be re-submitted in a revised form within a deadline of at least three months.

Date and signatures