Doctoral thesis defence
Information document
Doctoral School
February 2014
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Functions of the chair

Before the defence:

Once the examiners have been appointed, the chair convenes the thesis defence. The secretary then informs the Standing Committee of the Doctoral School, the doctoral candidate and the academic committee for the programme with at least ten days' notice. This information is published on the Doctoral School website.

During the defence:

a) The chair of the examination panel will be in charge of setting the measures for replacing any member who renounces membership or cannot be present with a substitute, in accordance with the prevailing doctoral regulations.

b) If this is not possible, another date must be agreed for the defence by the members of the panel, the doctoral candidate and the academic committee for the programme. The Doctoral School must be informed of the change.

c) If it is the chair who cannot be present for unexpected reasons, he or she must be substituted by the person chosen by the academic committee for the programme from among the other members and substitutes.

After the defence:

a) Once the doctoral candidate has presented the thesis, the members of the panel can pose questions and request clarification of any points they deem necessary. The chair will stipulate when and how the PhD holders present at the defence may pose questions.

b) Before adjourning the session, the chair will verbally communicate the mark awarded to the doctoral candidate and to the rest of the people present.

c) In the case of a thesis defence with remote members, the chair will state which members acted remotely on the copy of the thesis and the official results.
Functions of the secretary

Before the defence

a) The secretary will inform the Standing Committee of the Doctoral School, the doctoral candidate and the academic committee for the programme of the date and time of the thesis defence with at least ten days’ notice.

At the defence

a) If it is a requirement for the International Doctorate certification, the secretary must certify that at least the thesis abstract and conclusions have been defended in a language of scientific communication in the field of knowledge that is not one of the official languages of Spain, and will have to sign a statement that appears at the end of the official examination results to this effect. This rule does not apply if the period of study or research takes place in a Spanish-speaking country, the reports are in Spanish and the experts are Spanish-speaking.

b) The secretary will check that all the members of the panel have done the following:
   - Filled in and signed the marks reports (IQ).
   - Signed the official examination results.
   - Signed the thesis deposited at the Doctoral School.
   - Voted on the *cum laude* distinction and placed the form inside the envelope.

c) If the public defence of the thesis is held by videoconference, once the marks report, the signed copy of the thesis and the official examination results are ready, the official examination results must be sent in electronic format to the remote members, who will sign it and send it in electronic format to escola.doctorat@upc.edu. (1)

After the defence

a) The secretary will send the following documents, which must have been signed by all the members who were physically present at the defence, to the Doctoral School: (2)
   - Marks reports.
   - The official examination results.
   - A signed copy of the thesis.
   - The envelopes containing the votes regarding the *cum laude* distinction in a large envelope signed by all the members.

(1) Remote members must send the envelope containing the *cum laude* vote, the marks report and the official examination results to the Doctoral School by priority registered post or courier.

(2) If the secretary is not from the UPC, a member who is from the UPC must do so. The secretary may assign this function to the doctoral programme coordinator or administrative officer, or be send by registered mail to the Doctoral School.
Appointment of the examination panel

- The Standing Committee of the Doctoral School will appoint the examination panel, which will be made up of three members and two substitutes or five members and two substitutes, all of whom must be PhD holders of any nationality, on the basis of the proposal made by the academic committee for the doctoral programme. The Standing Committee may include ordinary members or substitute members who act remotely.

- The appointment of the examination panel must include explicit details of whether each of the members will be physically present or acting remotely:
  - If the panel has three members, only one may act remotely.¹
  - If the panel has five members, up to two may act remotely.

  The chair, the secretary and the doctoral candidate must always be present in the place in which the thesis is defended.

- A chair and a secretary must be appointed. They will generally be members of the UPC’s teaching and research staff with PhDs.

- Only a minority of the panel should be from the UPC (or, in the case of an interuniversity doctoral programme, from any of the universities involved).

- All the members of the panel must be PhD holders renowned in their field. If they belong to the UPC, they must have accredited research experience (in accordance with Chapter III, Art. 3, of the Academic Regulations for Doctoral Degree Courses, adapted to Royal Decree 99/2011).

- The unit in charge of the academic committee for the doctoral programme is informed of the appointment of the panel. Within a period of ten calendar days, it must send each of the members a notice of their appointment, the Doctoral Student Activity Report (DAD) and a copy of the thesis that is to be assessed. It must also inform them of the time, date and place of the defence.

¹ Including substitute members
Documents the examination panel must have with them at the defence

Before the defence
The academic committee for the programme shall send each of the remote members the following documents:

- The forms for the *cum laude* distinction secret ballot and the envelope in which they are collected.
- The marks report.
- The authorisation and statement of the appointment of the panel.
- The copy of the thesis (printed or digital) to be assessed.
- The doctoral candidate’s Doctoral Student Activity Report.
- The date, time and place of the thesis defence.
- The Examination Panel Guidelines.

At the defence

- The secretary will give the panel members the following documents:
  - The statement of the appointment of the panel.
  - A copy of the thesis.
  - The doctoral candidate’s Doctoral Student Activity Report (DAD), which gives details of the training he or she has undergone. (This report does not include a mark as such, but it is a qualitative assessment tool that completes the assessment of the doctoral thesis.)

- The secretary must also have:
  - The official examination results.
  - The copy of the thesis that has been deposited.
  - The assessment reports by external experts (if applicable)
  - The assessment reports by each of the members of the panel (IQ).
  - The forms for the *cum laude* distinction, the envelopes for the secret ballot and the large envelope in which they are collected, which will be signed by all the members and handed in to the Doctoral School.
Thesis defence

The defence is public and may take place at any time during the academic year.

The academic committee for the doctoral programme sets the time, date and place\(^2\) of the defence and will make these details known by e-mail (with a copy to the Doctoral School so that it can announce them on its website), in the following manner:

- With at least 48 hours' notice.
- Subsequent to the approval of the panel chair.
- To all the lecturers and researchers holders of PhDs who are affiliated with the unit or units that promote the doctoral programme.

The defence will consist of a presentation of the following items:

- The research carried out.
- The methodology used.
- The thesis content and specially the original contributions stemming from the research.
- The conclusions and research to be carried out in the future.

The panel may pose questions at the moment and in the manner the chair stipulates. Those present who can demonstrate that they hold a PhD will also be able to put forward questions following the instructions of the panel chair.

If any of the members act remotely, the academic committee for the doctoral programme must book a room that has videoconferencing facilities for the thesis defence. It will also be in charge of giving each of the remote members instructions on how to proceed in compliance with the Academic Regulations for Doctoral Degree Courses.

When remote members accept their appointment, they must guarantee that they have the technical means to be part of the panel and to participate via videoconference. They must carry out any checks before the defence to ensure that it goes smoothly and they must guarantee the soundness of their Internet connection and the proper functioning of the computers that they use at their institutions.

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\(^2\) The express authorisation of the Standing Committee of the Doctoral School is required if the defence is to take place outside the UPC.
Assessment of the doctoral thesis

Once the defence and the discussions are over, and the audience has left the room, each of the members of the examination panel will put forward, in the form of a standard document, their individual assessment of the thesis (IQ form), which will be appended to the Doctoral Student Activity Report (DAD).

The examination panel will award the overall mark that it considers appropriate from the following: Unsatisfactory, Satisfactory, Good, Very Good, which is then recorded in the official examination results that all the members of the panel must sign.

Before adjourning the session, the chair of the examination panel will verbally communicate the mark awarded to the doctoral candidate and to the rest of the people present.

Cum laude distinction

When the global mark awarded has been Very Good, and the members of the panel have informed the doctoral candidate of his or her mark, they may decide to award a cum laude distinction by secret ballot, choosing 'yes' or 'no' on the form that they will have been given beforehand.

If the answer is 'yes', they must also state the reasons for this decision:

- A significant advance in the state of knowledge, accredited by publications in indexed journals of proven relevance in the field (e.g. JCR indexed journals).
- Approval of the contributions by the scientific and academic community, accredited by the dissemination of results at leading conferences in the field.
- Other reasons related to its scientific relevance, socioeconomic impact or patenting.

Once the members have voted, they must place the form in the envelope, which they must then seal.

The secretary collects the envelopes and places them inside a large envelope that all the members of the panel must sign. The secretary or delegate (a panel member from the UPC or the doctoral programme coordinator/administrative officer) will deliver all of the documents relating to the defence to the Doctoral School within five working days. The documents can also be sending by registered mail to the Doctoral School.

The votes are counted at another session by the Standing Committee of the Doctoral School once the necessary documents have been received from the UPC and the remote members (in the case of a thesis defence held via videoconference). The Committee will delegate the tasks listed below to its chair or secretary, who will:

- Count the votes. (The cum laude distinction will be awarded only if all votes are in favour.)
- Record the result in the official examination results.
- Record the result on the copy of the thesis.
- Notify the doctoral candidate, the department and the examiners of the result.
- Record the result in the Doctoral Student Activity Report (DAD).
- Add a statement to the official examination results and the marks report to the effect that it is attaching the official examination results with the scanned signatures of the chair, the secretary and the member or members that were physically present and the original signature of the remote member.
Substitutes for members of the examination panel

If the chair is unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, the academic committee will appoint a new chair from the remaining panel members.

If any member is not present at the public defence, the substitutes must be called on; if this fails, the chair must cancel the event and set another date. The rest of the members of the panel must be consulted, as must be the doctoral candidate and the academic committee for the doctoral programme. If they are in agreement, a new date must be set. The Standing Committee of the Doctoral School (through the Doctoral School) must be informed of the change.