

## Regulation on Doctoral Studies

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This Regulation supplements the Instruction on Doctoral Studies. The subjects allowed for inclusion in a doctoral degree are specified in Appendix 1 of the Åbo Akademi University Degree Regulations concerning the educational responsibility of Åbo Akademi University.

## **Chapter 1. General**

### **1 § Research ethics**

The responsible conduct of research is an essential part of the quality at Åbo Akademi University. Åbo Akademi University operations are regulated by the Instruction on Ethics and the Responsible Conduct of Research.

### **2 § The role of professors and Faculty Boards**

A professor's tasks include the conducting of scientific research and the performance of research-based tuition. In addition to this, a professor's tasks also include the supervision and development of research and education activities, the procurement of research funding and participation in national and international collaboration within their respective area of responsibility. A professor's work also includes the supervision and examination of doctoral students.

Faculty Boards decide on the granting of doctoral student places, funded doctoral positions and equivalent positions in each faculty.

## **Chapter 2. Admission to Doctoral studies**

### **3 § Admission to studies leading to a postgraduate degree**

Section 36 of the Universities Act (558/2009) provides for the admission of students. The requirements are: 1) a relevant Master's degree awarded by a university; 2) a relevant Master's degree awarded by a university of applied sciences; or 3) a relevant applicable study programme abroad which in the awarding country gives eligibility for the corresponding level of higher education. The Faculty Board renders decisions on admissions to doctoral studies.

### **4 § Eligibility for doctoral studies**

Section 37 of the Universities Act (558/2009) specifies the eligibility requirements for studies leading to a higher education degree. The Faculty Board or Dean (if this matter is delegated to them) may require that students admitted to study for a doctoral degree must complete the necessary supplementary studies in order to acquire the knowledge and skills needed for the study programme.

When an applicant seeks the right to study for doctoral studies, but the faculty requires the supplementing of prior studies before studies may commence, the applicant may be granted the right to complete the necessary supplementary studies at Åbo Akademi University.

Applicants who are granted the right to complete supplementary studies may be enrolled either to complete their prior degree or as a doctoral student who is obligated to complete their supplementary studies before earning a doctoral degree. In the first instance, the right to study may be changed to degree studies after the supervisor has notified the faculty that the supplementary studies have been completed.

The right to study for supplementary studies remains valid for two full academic years after the doctoral student has registered for study.

## **5 § Doctoral students**

Applicants for doctoral studies are accepted to complete their doctoral degree. A doctoral candidate at Åbo Akademi University is referred to as a doctoral student. A doctoral student may choose to complete a licentiate degree.

Students who were granted the right to study by no later than 1 January 2012 belong to a doctoral programme. Students who were granted the right to study by no later than 31 December 2011 should apply for transfer to a doctoral programme by submitting an updated individual study plan signed by all parties to their faculty. Individual study plans are approved by the Dean.

## **6 § Application for the right to study**

Applications for the right to study are filled out and submitted online in the Studyinfo.fi service. The faculties have maximum 4 application periods each academic year. Only complete applications will be processed. If an application is incomplete, the applicant will be asked to complete the application within two weeks of receiving an incomplete application notification. The application contains information on the applicant, prior studies (including upper secondary level studies), language skills, thesis language, doctoral programme, individual study plan (including a research plan) that is written in either Swedish or English and may undergo a plagiarism control.

By the time the applicant has reached the admission phase, they should have a main supervisor, who is employed by Åbo Akademi University, and an assistant supervisor. If the applicant intends to complete their studies with a joint degree or double degree, this must be specified in the individual study plan.

## **7 § Admission decision**

The faculty checks the applicant's eligibility and documents before the admission decision is made. The decision to grant the right to study or reject the application is made by the Faculty Board, which may delegate the matter to the Dean.

## **8 § Accepting a study right, registration and enrolment**

Applicants who have been accepted to doctoral studies must accept their study right and register as present at Åbo Akademi University on the Studyinfo.fi service within 14 days of the date of the admission decision. All students are required to register as present for their first year of study. After the first year, doctoral students shall register every academic year as present or absent.

A doctoral student who is registered at Åbo Akademi University, but fails to register for the academic year and would like to continue their studies at a later time must submit a request

for re-entry into the student register. In order to be re-entered in the student register, the doctoral student must have an updated, approved individual study plan.

## **Chapter 2. Right to study**

### **9 § Rights included in the right to study at Åbo Akademi University**

A doctoral student who is registered as present to complete their degree at Åbo Akademi University and has a valid individual study plan has the right to participate in the instruction and examination provided by Åbo Akademi University as well as the right to receive supervision.

A doctoral student who has completed their doctoral degree at Åbo Akademi University has the right to study at Åbo Akademi University for as long as their registration as present is valid or no longer than by the end of the academic year.

### **10 § Individual study plan for doctoral studies (ISP)**

When the right to study is granted, an individual study plan is also approved. The rights and obligations of Åbo Akademi University and the doctoral student are also listed in the individual study plan. The individual study plan includes a research plan, a plan for doctoral studies, a time plan, a financial plan explaining how the two first years will be funded, and notes on study progress and the number of credits earned.

The individual study plan is signed by the main supervisor, all assistant supervisors, the head of subject and doctoral student in connection with the application for the right to study.

### **11 § Main supervisor and assistant supervisors**

Each doctoral student shall be assigned a main supervisor and at least one assistant supervisor. Åbo Akademi University is obligated to provide supervision for at least 4 years. A main supervisor must be at least a docent or possess equivalent academic qualifications in a given subject or a unit comparable to the subject in order to supervise a doctoral student. The main supervisor must be employed by Åbo Akademi University. An assistant supervisor must have completed a doctoral degree and does not have to be employed by Åbo Akademi University.

The main supervisor must be employed by Åbo Akademi University for the entire four-year period for which they have committed themselves to serve in that capacity. If the main supervisor is a fixed-term employee whose employment relationship is set to end, then the assistant supervisor(s) shall also be employees of Åbo Akademi University. If the supervision process is discontinued by any of the supervisors or the doctoral student during the four-year period, the faculty shall immediately appoint a new supervisor.

The switching of supervisors or assistant supervisors shall be done by submitting and registering a new individual study plan.

### **12 § Follow-up of doctoral studies**

The studies of each doctoral student are followed-up continuously in an individual study plan for doctoral studies. The doctoral student shall update the plan and submit it to the main supervisor at the end of the autumn term. The main supervisor is responsible for ensuring that follow-up and performance reviews are conducted with the doctoral student

at least once a year, and that the individual study plan is jointly approved and the assistant supervisors are notified.

Doctoral studies, or any part of them, shall be assessed on a recurring basis in accordance with systematic quality work for research and education at Åbo Akademi University.

### **13 § Passive register**

A doctoral student shall be moved to the passive register if they have registered themselves as absent for three (3) consecutive academic years. A doctoral student can also be moved to the passive register if the individual study plan has not been updated and the supervisor states that the doctoral student's studies and research work have not progressed in accordance with the individual study plan during the last academic year.

The supervisor may recommend to the Dean that the doctoral student be moved to the passive register. The doctoral student must be given an opportunity to be heard before any decision is taken. During the spring term, the Dean shall render the decision as to whether a doctoral student will be moved to the passive register so that the decision enters into effect as of 31 July of that same year. The doctoral student and supervisors shall be notified of the decision.

A doctoral student in the passive register does not lose their right to study but they may not request supervision and their completed courses will not be registered.

A doctoral student may request that they be moved to the active register by submitting a request for activation as well as the following three appendices:

- 1) an individual study plan (which is signed by all supervisors and the head of subject),
- 2) a realistic time plan, and
- 3) a research plan.

The Dean shall decide on whether the doctoral student will be moved to the active register when the supervisors have approved the request.

## **Chapter 3. Completion of a doctoral degree**

### **14 § Plagiarism control**

All material related to the dissertation shall be subjected to a plagiarism control by means of the plagiarism detection program used at Åbo Akademi University. All articles, regardless of whether they are authored by one or more people, shall be subjected to a plagiarism control. Articles which have already been published are not subjected to a plagiarism control.

### **15 § Preliminary examiners for a doctoral dissertation**

The Dean appoints preliminary examiners based on a recommendation made by the head of subject and a discussion with the doctoral student. Preliminary examiners shall be at least docents or possess equivalent academic qualifications. The examiners' primary occupation should be outside Åbo Akademi University. The dissertation supervisors cannot serve as preliminary examiners. The Dean may, upon consideration, appoint preliminary examiners in cases where the doctoral student requests that the manuscript be given a preliminary examination, even if the supervisors and/or the head of subject have not approved the request.

## **16 § Preliminary examination of the doctoral dissertation**

A doctoral student who is registered for doctoral studies and wishes to defend their dissertation for a doctoral degree shall submit their manuscript to the main supervisor. If the main supervisor deems the manuscript to be ready for the plagiarism check and evaluation, the head of subject shall recommend two preliminary examiners. If the manuscript in question is an article-based doctoral dissertation, the manuscript shall comply with the provisions concerning article-based dissertations and joint publications. In certain exceptions, the Dean may decide to forward the manuscript for preliminary examination (see section 15 above).

Article-based dissertations and monographs shall be subjected to a preliminary examination after passing the plagiarism check. Monographs must also be approved in language revision before they may be submitted for preliminary examination.

The Dean appoints two preliminary examiners, who will issue a written report based on the assessment criteria within 60 days. If one of the preliminary examiners recommends that the manuscript be rejected, this shall require the appointment of a new preliminary examiner, who must issue a report within 60 days. If the new preliminary examiner also rejects the manuscript, the supervision process shall be resumed. If two preliminary examiners issue a report rejecting the manuscript, the manuscript shall be returned to the doctoral student and the supervision process shall be resumed.

Preliminary examiners are instructed to assess manuscripts as follows:

- Manuscript is accepted
- Manuscript is rejected

The process shall go as follows:

- The process continues normally.
- The process is interrupted

When a manuscript receives two passing grades, the request for a public defence shall be submitted within 60 days.

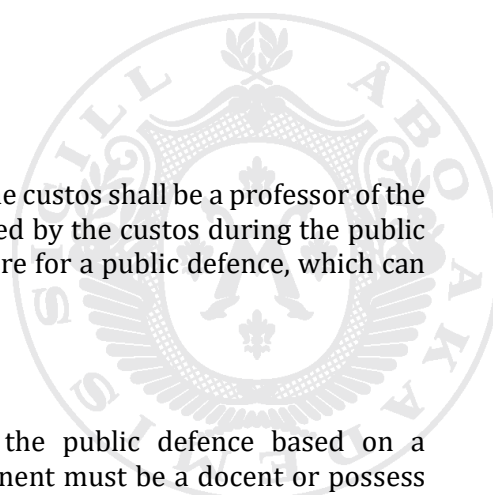
## **17 § Arrangements for a public defence**

The Dean grants permission for the public defence based on the reports submitted by the preliminary examiners. In order to gain permission for a public defence, all doctoral studies must be completed.

The language to be used in the public defence shall be, as a rule, Swedish or English. A Finnish national respondent shall deliver a *lectio praecursoria* in Swedish.

The Dean shall decide on which language will be used at the public defence and/or for the *lectio praecursoria* as well as the time and place for the public defence. The decision shall be rendered no later than 1 month prior to the public defence.

In cases of *force majeure*, the Dean shall render a decision on alternative arrangements for the public defence.



## **18 § Custos**

The Dean shall appoint a custos for the public defence. The custos shall be a professor of the faculty or the main supervisor. The tasks to be performed by the custos during the public defence are specified in the instructions for the procedure for a public defence, which can be found on the Åbo Akademi University intranet.

## **19 § Opponent**

The Dean shall appoint one or two opponents for the public defence based on a recommendation made by the head of subject. An opponent must be a docent or possess equivalent academic qualifications, and their primary occupation must be outside the university. Dissertation supervisors may not serve as opponents. The opponent shall conduct the final critical examination of the entire dissertation.

## **20 § Examination Board and its members**

The Dean shall appoint an Examination Board for each public defence based on a recommendation made by the head of subject. The Examination Board shall be comprised of a chair and two persons from the subject in question or a closely related subject area at Åbo Akademi University or outside it. The primary occupation of at least one member shall be outside the subject in question at Åbo Akademi University. At least one member shall be a professor. The committee members shall possess the qualifications for at least docent or equivalent. Preliminary examiners may not serve as a member on the Examination Board. When the doctoral degree is completed as a joint degree or double degree, the faculty may decide to use a different Examination Board composition in order to fulfil the wishes of the partner university.

Supervisors are heard, but cannot otherwise be present at Examination Board meetings, nor may they serve as members of the Examination Board.

The task of the Examination Board is to, together with the opponent, discuss the assessment criteria and grading scale, partly based on sections 22 §, 23 § and 24 §, and partly in relation to other dissertations in the subject and scientific discipline in question. The Examination Board shall then issue an assessment decision, which is to be confirmed by the Faculty Board (see section 23).

## **21 § Public defence of a dissertation**

The main part of the public defence consists of the respondent's *lectio præcursoria*, general comments made by the opponent regarding the dissertation, a detailed examination made by the opponent and the respondent's defence as well as the opponent's final opinion. This part of the public defence should take no less than two hours and no more than four hours. After this part, others may also pose questions regarding the dissertation to the respondent.

More detailed instructions on the procedure for the public defence can be found on the Åbo Akademi University website.

## **22 § Assessment criteria**

Doctoral dissertations shall be assessed based on the following criteria:

### **Choice of subject and research problem**

The dissertation must present well-founded, new knowledge, demonstrate innovative approaches and it can also open up an entirely new branch of research. The dissertation must be appropriately defined. Aims, problem-setting, and research questions must be formulated so that they can be answered in a meaningful way.

#### **Conceptual clarity and theoretical mastery of the subject**

The work must be conceptually clear and the author must master the underlying theories and be able to conceptualise the research problem. Definitions and conceptualisations must be clearly expressed.

#### **Research methods**

The methods must be properly motivated and appropriate, with respect to the research problem. A consistent and insightful application of the research methods is considered a merit.

#### **Material and source criticism**

The material must be of a qualitatively high standard and quantitatively adequate with regard to the research problem and the research method. The source material is critically analysed and reliably accounted for by means of correct citations and references.

#### **Presentation of the results**

The research results must be presented clearly and logically. The analysis must be consistent and well-founded. The presentation of the results must correspond with the aim and problem-setting.

#### **Conclusions**

The conclusions must be systematic, well-founded and drawn from the aim, research problem, material and method.

#### **The work as a whole and linguistic form**

The dissertation must be logically organised, the language must be clearly articulated and the graphic layout must be clean and easy to follow. The text must be consistent and logical, focusing on the essential. The argument must be made logically. The author must show proof of critical thinking, originality and independence.

The defence of the dissertation is also taken into consideration in its assessment.

### **23 § Grading of the doctoral dissertation**

The Examination Board shall hold a meeting with the opponent immediately after the public defence. The opponent(s) shall submit a written, motivated report to the faculty within 14 days. The report shall include the proposed grade.

After this, the Examination Board submits within 7 days its assessment decision and provide an explanation if it differs from the grade proposed by the opponent.

Before the grading of the doctoral dissertation is confirmed by the Faculty Board, the doctoral student shall be given an opportunity to respond to the decision issued by the Examination Board. The doctoral student and supervisors are provided with the opinion given by the Opponent(s) and the Examination Board's decision.



The Faculty Board confirms the assessment of the dissertation and the defence. If the Faculty Board does not confirm the assessment decision of the Examination Board, the matter will be addressed as a reconsideration case by the Faculty Board.

The decision shall be delivered to the doctoral student along with instructions on how to submit a reconsideration request.

## **24 § Grading scale and assessment criteria for dissertations**

The grading scale for a passing dissertation consists of the grades *Pass* and *Pass with honours*.

### *Pass*

The dissertation has no major weaknesses with regard to the assessment criteria. Weaknesses in some areas are compensated by merits in others. The dissertation contributes new knowledge to the field in question. Where formalities are concerned, the dissertation is primarily without flaws and the examinee can be deemed as having a mastery of their subject.

### *Pass with honours*

The dissertation has been completed to the highest standard in every aspect. It clearly demonstrates the examinee's independence and confidence, and contributes essential new knowledge on the research front of the field in question. The dissertation must clearly be of the highest international standard to be given a grade of *Pass with honours*.

## **25 § Degree certificates**

The Dean decide on the issuing of certificates. Applicable provisions concerning certificates are found in the Åbo Akademi University Degree Regulations. Degree certificates are always issued in both Swedish and English.

By decision of the Faculty Board, persons completing their doctoral degree may receive the traditional insignia for their degree at a formal conferral ceremony or without a ceremony.

## **Chapter 4. Completion of a licentiate degree**

### **26 § Completion of a licentiate degree**

A doctoral student may choose to complete a licentiate degree after finishing the studies that are part of their doctoral studies and that the faculty has approved in the individual study plan as well as the specialisation studies that may possibly be included in the degree. The licentiate degree also includes a licentiate thesis.

### **27 § Examiners for the licentiate thesis**

The Dean shall appoint examiners based on a recommendation made by the head of subject. Both examiners shall have doctoral degrees. The primary occupation of at least one of the examiners shall be outside the subject, but it is preferable that both have occupations outside the subject. Supervisors may not serve as examiners.

## **28 § Assessment of the licentiate thesis**

The assessment criteria for licentiate theses are identical to those for doctoral dissertations (see section 22 above). Licentiate theses are assessed after passing a plagiarism check.

The Dean shall appoint two examiners, who will each issue a written report based on the assessment criteria within 30 days. The report shall contain a recommendation for passing or rejecting the thesis. If one of the examiners recommends that the thesis be rejected, this shall require the appointment of a new examiner, who must issue a new report within 30 days. If both examiners submit a report rejecting the thesis, the thesis shall be returned to the author, supervisors shall be appointed and the supervision process shall resume.

Prior to assessment of the licentiate thesis, the author shall be given an opportunity to respond to the examiners' report. The reports that serve as the basis for the pending assessment shall be sent by email to the author and main supervisor.

The Dean shall assess the licentiate thesis based on the examiners' recommendations and any responses given by the author.

The decision, also including instructions for submitting a reconsideration request, shall be delivered to the author. A reconsideration request must be submitted in writing within 14 days of receiving the assessment result.

The grading scale for an approved thesis for a licentiate degree consists only of the word *Pass*. In order to receive a passing grade, the licentiate thesis shall have no major weaknesses with regard to the assessment criteria. Weaknesses in some areas are compensated by merits in others. The dissertation contributes new knowledge to the field in question. Where formalities are concerned, the dissertation is primarily without flaws and the examinee can be deemed as having a mastery of their subject.

## **Chapter 5. Formal requirements for doctoral dissertations**

### **29 § Form and publicity of dissertations**

Licentiate theses and doctoral dissertations shall be submitted electronically to Åbo Akademi University's publication database, where they are publicly available. Exceptions to this are dissertations which are being prepared for publication or which are partly confidential for compelling reasons. Such dissertations shall be stored electronically, but are not publicly available, as specified in the Åbo Akademi University Degree Regulations.

The dissertation may be submitted as a monograph or article-based dissertation. More detailed instructions on publishing, printing, distribution, e-theses, etc. can be found on the Åbo Akademi University website.

### **30 § Languages**

#### **Abstract in Swedish**

If the dissertation is written in a language other than Swedish, Danish or Norwegian, an abstract in Swedish (1 page) shall be included with the dissertation.

#### **Abstract in English**

If the dissertation is written in a language other than English, an abstract in English (1 page) shall be included with the dissertation.

### **Abstracts in dissertations published by a commercial publisher**

If the dissertation is published by a commercial publisher, the abstract may be printed on a loose leaf, which can be inserted in the copies of the dissertation to be used in the public defence.

### **31 § Article-based dissertations and joint articles**

Scientific, peer-reviewed articles or manuscripts dealing with the same complex of problems and an integration (summarising chapter of a compilation dissertation) of these or other work that meets equivalent academic criteria can be accepted as parts of licentiate theses or doctoral dissertations. The summarising chapter of a compilation dissertation is always a mandatory part of an article-based dissertation in order for it to be considered equivalent to a licentiate thesis or doctoral dissertation.

A typical article-based dissertation contains 1-3 articles for a licentiate thesis and 3-6 articles for a doctoral dissertation. As a rule, the articles must be published or approved for publication. If articles not yet approved for publication are used, the preliminary examiners shall attach special importance to them.

Articles authored by several people can also be approved, provided that the independent contribution of the doctoral student is clearly evident. The doctoral student shall be the first author listed in at least one of the articles to be used. The Dean may approve the examination of article-based dissertations with fewer than the recommended number of publications if the comprehensiveness and quality of the articles is sufficiently high.

## **Chapter 6. Conferral ceremony**

### **32 § Permission to hold a conferral ceremony**

The Rector requests the right to hold a conferral ceremony from the Chancellor. Honorary Doctors and doctors are also conferred at the ceremony. In addition to these, Jubilee doctors may also be conferred.

### **33 § Conferrers**

The Faculty Board appoints conferrers for each faculty as follows:

A conferrer for Arts, Psychology and Logopedics (FHPT)

A conferrer for Theology (FHPT)

A conferrer for Education and Welfare Studies (FPV)

A conferrer for Social Sciences, Business and Economics (FSE)

A conferrer for Science (FNT)

A conferrer for Engineering (FNT)

At the conferral ceremony, the conferrers greet the *promovendi* and present them with the insignia. The conferral ceremony starts with the conferral of Jubilee doctors, followed by honorary doctors and then doctors in the respective scientific disciplines in the order specified above. Finally, the conferrer confers the Doctors of Philosophy in a group who have completed their degree in accordance with section 7 of the Instruction on Doctoral Studies.

The language used in the conferral ceremony is either Swedish or Latin. At the conferral ceremony, the *promovendi* are presented with the insignia for their respective doctoral degree. The Faculty Board specifies which insignia belongs with each doctoral degree.

### **34 § Conferral register**

A register of *promovendi* is kept in connection with the student register.

## **Chapter 6. Miscellaneous provisions**

### **35 § Notification**

All notifications (except the admission decision) are sent electronically to abo.fi addresses, provided that consent for electronic notification has been given in connection with registration for the academic term. In other cases, notifications shall be sent to a mailing address given to Åbo Akademi University.

### **36 § Rectification request**

A person who has applied for admission as a doctoral student may submit a rectification request to the Åbo Akademi University Examination Board. The request shall be submitted in writing within 14 days of issuing the admission decision.

The Faculty Board shall decide on rectification concerning the assessment of a dissertation in doctoral studies.

### **37 § Entry into force**

This Regulation shall enter into force on 1 January 2021, replacing a portion of the previous Instruction on Doctoral Studies at Åbo Akademi University (which was approved by the University Board on 19 December 2017).