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Purpose and scope

These rules of procedure discuss the appointment and duties of opponents for a doctoral thesis at the University of Iceland. The purpose of this document is to clarify procedures and ensure consistency across UI schools.

These rules apply across the University of Iceland.

Responsibility

The Graduate School is responsible for ensuring that these rules of procedure are correct at any given time. Chairs of the standing committees for doctoral studies¹ and coordinators for doctoral studies² are responsible for ensuring that the rules are followed.

Eligibility requirements for opponents

1. Opponents must be recognised experts in the subject of the doctoral thesis. They must have published work related to the student's project in a channel that meets rigorous academic standards. They must also be capable of participating in academic debates on the topics of the doctoral research.
2. Opponents must have a doctorate or equivalent. Professorial competence may stand in lieu of a doctorate.
3. Opponents must not have been members of the doctoral committee for the project in question and must not be collaborating on research with the doctoral candidate or committee.
4. At least one opponent shall be a specialist or member of teaching staff at another university or research institute.
5. Opponents must not have professional connections to the doctoral student, academic supervisor or doctoral committee of such a nature that their impartiality may be called into question. Opponents should not have published any papers with the doctoral student, the academic supervisor or members of the doctoral studies committee in the last five years.³
6. If a nominated opponent works at the same faculty or university as the doctoral student or has other connections to the student, academic supervisor or doctoral committee (e.g. has collaborated or co-authored a scientific paper with them), these connections must be disclosed. The choice of nomination must be justified with a reasoned argument, explaining why the disclosed connections do not disqualify the opponent. The Graduate School will consider the nomination and call for a new nomination if it believes the connections may disqualify the opponent.

Other connections that may disqualify opponents are outlined in the Administrative Procedures Act no. 37/1993.


Implementation

A member of the doctoral committee will contact potential opponents, emphasising that the appointment is contingent on formal approval within the University. The doctoral committee can get a template letter to send to potential opponents from the relevant school or faculty. The

¹ SSS, SHS, SENS: Faculty standing committee for doctoral studies. SH and SE: School standing committee for doctoral studies.

² SSS, SENS, SH, SHS: School coordinator for doctoral studies. SHS: Faculty coordinator for doctoral studies.

³ In the case of meta-analyses or jointly authored articles, a statement should be submitted confirming that no formal collaboration on the research or writing of the paper took place.

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administrative supervisor will, on behalf of the doctoral committee, propose two opponents using the request system in the PhD Portal.

The school or faculty standing committee will review the request in the PhD Portal, looking into both the professional competence of the nominated opponents and their connections to the doctoral student and committee, before submitting it to the Graduate School for confirmation. If the standing committee or the Graduate School does not approve the nominated opponents, the doctoral committee must propose new opponents.

The coordinator for doctoral studies will send the opponents a letter of appointment, the thesis, an evaluation sheet, instructions on how to evaluate the thesis and details about the defence. Opponents must not have any direct contact with the doctoral candidate, the academic supervisor or the doctoral committee until the defence.

Opponents have a **maximum of eight weeks** after receiving the doctoral thesis to review the manuscript and deliver a reasoned written evaluation. Schools are authorised to set shorter deadlines.

The opponents may conclude that the manuscript is a) ready for defence, b) approved for defence subject to certain revisions or c) not ready for defence. If the opponents require revisions, the doctoral candidate generally has **eight weeks** to respond and deliver a revised manuscript along with a report describing the changes made. Schools are authorised to set shorter deadlines. Opponents have a maximum of **two weeks** to evaluate whether the revisions are satisfactory. Schools are authorised to set shorter deadlines. If the opponents reject the thesis, they must provide a reasoned argument for their decision. Next steps are determined by the rules of procedure after one or both opponents reject the thesis manuscript as not ready for defence.

Once the opponents have deemed the thesis ready for defence, the doctoral candidate shall submit the thesis to a digital archive in accordance with the rules of procedure on the digital submission and archiving of PhD theses at the University of Iceland. The thesis must be accessible for at least two weeks before the defence, in accordance with the Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009, Article 70, item 2.

References

[Regulation for the University of Iceland no. 569/2009](#)
[Administrative Procedures Act no. 37/1993](#)
[Rules of procedure after one or both opponents reject the thesis manuscript as not ready for defence](#)
[Rules of procedure on the digital submission and archiving of PhD theses at the University of Iceland](#)