

## Public defence – practical information.

The doctoral public defence marks the final stage of a doctoral degree; the public defence additionally forms the public face of NTNU as a centre of research. It is important for the university that the public defence takes place within a fitting framework.

### ***Place***

The faculty administration will reserve suitable rooms to provide public access to the trial lecture and public defence. Floral table decorations will be provided to mark the occasion. The candidate will receive these at the end of the public defence as a greeting from their academic peers.

### ***Dress Code***

A business casual / formal dress code is in place. The dress code applies to the candidate and the members of the assessment committee. The chairperson of the public defence – the dean or their substitute – wears a ceremonial gown during the public defence.

### ***Ceremonial structure***

The Public defence starts with the chairperson of the public defence, assessment-committee members and the candidate walking in procession into the room. The audience stands during this procession; the procession is lead by the chairperson for the public defence, the candidate, the first and second opponent, and finally the third member of the assessment committee. The chairperson of the public defence takes the floor, while the rest of the procession takes their places. The audience sits when invited to do so by the chairperson of the public defence.

### ***The role of the chairperson of the public defence during trial lectures***

The chairperson of the public defence introduces the trial lecture based on a manuscript provided by the faculty administration. Following the trial lecture, the chairperson provides information about the time and place of the public defence as outlined in the manuscript. Trial lectures last for 45 minutes.

All members of the assessment committee must attend the trial lecture(s). In the event of a member of the committee being unable to attend due to unforeseen circumstances, a substitute may be appointed (by the dean or substitute) for the duration of the trial lecture. Immediately following the trial lecture(s), the assessment committee decides whether the lecture(s) can be approved. The trial lecture(s) must be approved before the candidate can proceed to the public defence. Before the public defence, the chairperson of the public defence clarifies with the committee administrator whether the trial lecture(s) is/are approved. If the assessment committee approves the trial lecture(s), the candidate may defend their thesis at the public defence.

### ***The role of the chairperson of the public defence during public defence***

The chairperson of the public defence wears the ceremonial gown during the public defence; this should be borrowed from and returned to the faculty administration.

Public defence: During the interval between the trial lecture and public defence, the chairperson of the public defence should clarify the practical details of the public defence for the candidate and opponents. The public defence takes the following form:

- Procession
- Chairperson of the public defence's introduction
- The candidate presents a 15-20-minute summary of the most important research contributions of their thesis
- The first opponent begins their opposition. This opposition takes around 45 minutes (preferably less than one hour)
- 15 minute interval  
The chairperson of the public defence reminds the audience that any *ex auditorio* opponents must make themselves known to him/her during the interval

- Any *ex auditorio* opponents are given the floor to an acceptable extent, i.e, limited to short comments/questions
- The second opponent takes the floor; again, this should not take more than 45 minutes
- When the second opponent has finished their opposition, the chairperson of the public defence declares the public defence to be at an end, and tells the audience that the result of the public defence will be reported to the dean

What follows is the informal part of the public defence, which is led by the chairperson of the public defence according to what they feel is appropriate. It is nevertheless usual to thank the opponents and the members of the assessment committee for their work. Following this, it is usual to direct attention to the candidate, and thank them for their work, as well as give them flowers from the faculty. At this point, the chairperson of the public defence must be careful to avoid any comments that may anticipate the assessment committee's summary of the public defence – one can, for example, thank the candidate for their work without congratulating them on their degree. One can, for example, mention that the doctoral degree is officially awarded by the dean, but that it is usually the case that when one has come so far in the process that this is usually unproblematic. NB: Even if one has previously agreed some manner of indicating that the assessment committee is satisfied with the candidate's defence, it is nevertheless the dean who awards doctoral degrees. In principle, things can «come up» in this process. Following the chairperson for the public defence's summary, it is usual for other parties to offer their congratulations, flowers, etc.

Variation in the form of the public defence: it is important to realize that opponents sometimes wish to diverge from the standard public defence model of two clearly demarcated sections. In such cases, opponents often wish to share the floor, so that both opponents are active during the whole public defence, in which case, it is most practical that the chairperson of the public defence gives the floor to the first opponent, and that the opponents then give the floor to one-another during the public defence. This should be agreed upon beforehand.

In case of situations that can be perceived as uncomfortable or problematic while the public defence is underway: call an interval! If you feel the need for advice, contact the faculty administration.

#### *Procession*

The public defence starts when the chairperson of the public defence, members of the assessment committee and the candidate enter the room in procession. When the procession enters the room, the audience stands. The order in the procession is as follows: chairperson of the public defence, candidate, first and then second opponent, and finally, the third member of the assessment committee. The chairperson of the public defence takes the floor immediately, while the rest of the procession takes their places. The audience is seated upon signal from the chairperson of the public defence.

#### *Chairperson of the public defence starts the public defence*

The chairperson introduces the public defence based on a manuscript provided by the faculty administration. The candidate then takes their place and gives a concise summary of the aim and results of their research as reported in their thesis. The candidate spends between 15 and 20 minutes on this. The chairperson of the public defence sits during the public defence.

#### *The chairperson of the public defence gives the floor to the first opponent*

The next phase in the public defence is marked by the chairperson of the public defence standing and giving the floor to the first opponent, asking them to begin the examination of the candidate's work. The candidate remains (standing) in their place throughout the entire public defence, while the first opponent is invited to take the floor. Where the candidate and opponents are positioned is dependent on the geography of the room itself, as well as access to necessary technical equipment, etc. This should be clarified with the involved parties prior to the public defence.

#### *Post-interval*

Following the interval, there is no new procession. The committee members take their places, while the candidate takes their place. Any *ex auditorio* opponents who have made themselves known to the chairperson of the public

defence are given the floor – within reason – before the second opponent begins their examination. *Ex auditorio* opponents should be requested to ask their questions while standing by their seat in the room. Following any *ex auditorio* opponents, the second opponent should be asked to take the floor.

#### *Protests/objections*

If anyone at the public defence has any protests/objections to the candidate's thesis (plagiarism, unremarked co-authorship, impartiality on the part of the committee members, etc.), these should be noted by the chairperson of the public defence. The public defence should nevertheless be completed, but a report of the matter should be sent to the dean following the public defence.

#### *The end of the public defence*

When the second opponent indicates that they have finished their examination, the chairperson of the public defence announces the end of the public defence. Please see the notes above.

#### *Social events*

Some candidates wish to celebrate their public defence by inviting the chairperson of the public defence, the committee members, supervisor(s) as well as head of their academic department to dinner or social event following the public defence. It is usual that the family and friends of the candidate are also invited to such events. Any such events are, however, a private affair.

#### *Gift from the university*

As a mark of recognition from NTNU/SVT, the doctoral candidate receives a gift given by the chairperson of the public defence or head of department following the public defence or at the social event following the public defence.