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Guidelines for third-cycle courses and study programmes within the Faculty of Medicine and Health (MH)

Policy document Örebro University

Category: Guidelines

Reg. no: ORU 1.2.1-07668/2022

Adopted by: Faculty Board of Medicine and Health

Adopted: 2024-05-07

Document owner: Faculty Office



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Guidelines for third-cycle courses and study programmes within the Faculty of Medicine and Health

1. General

These guidelines have been adopted by the Faculty Board of Medicine and Health on 7 May 2024. They are a supplement to existing rules and regulations for third-cycle courses and study programmes (below also referred to as doctoral courses and study programmes) at Örebro University, which are summarised in the [Regulations Handbook for Doctoral Education at Örebro University](#). There are also local guidelines for doctoral courses and study programmes at the [School of Medical Sciences](#) and the [School of Health Sciences](#) respectively.

2. Admission to doctoral courses and study programmes

The [Admissions Regulations](#) for doctoral courses and study programmes at Örebro University have been issued by the university board (ORU 06907/2020).

Admission to doctoral courses and study programmes, whether they are to conclude with the award of a licentiate or doctoral degree, should be preceded by an admission seminar (ORU 03167/2020) or a planning seminar. The admission seminar provides the candidate with an opportunity to present, together with the intended principal supervisor, their planned doctoral thesis project.

The seminar is led by the head of subject/specialisation coordinator, or another person appointed by the subject. The candidate opens the seminar by presenting their research plan. This is followed by a discussion about the plan, details concerning supervision, the candidate's contributions to the work, as well as ethical aspects and requisite ethics approvals. Before the seminar is concluded, the need for any further amendments to the plan prior to a decision on admission are identified.

3. Programme concluding with a doctoral degree

A doctoral degree is awarded when the doctoral student has completed a programme of 240 credits within a doctoral subject area.

a. Mid-way review

Guidelines and a checklist for the mid-way review in the subjects medical science¹, sport science and disability research can be found at www.oru.se.

¹ In accordance with decisions by the head of school (ORU 05765/2019) as well as the faculty board (03631/2022).

- The mid-way review should be held after half of the doctoral programme has been completed, that is, after approximately two years of full-time studies.
- To review the thesis work, a minimum of two subject specialists are to be appointed, of which at least one must be from another higher education institution and at least one must have the qualifications required for appointment as a docent. These experts should be researchers who have obtained their PhDs and possess adequate subject knowledge.
- For the experts to be able to offer feedback without the limitations arising from any conflicts of interest, they should not be linked to the doctoral project and act independently of the doctoral student and supervisors.
- Experts from the mid-way review may later on be involved in the public defence, however, not in the role as external reviewer. The formal rules on conflicts of interest and disqualification apply.
- The mid-way review is led by a chair who is a senior researcher and who has been appointed by the school. The doctoral student's supervisor may not be appointed chair.
- The summarising introductory chapter for the mid-way review should follow the instructions for the [mid-way summary](#) compiled by the school and should be written using the university's thesis template. The background should be limited, and the text is to have a clear forward-looking focus. The mid-way summary should be written in English².
- The completed as well as the planned thesis work are to be reviewed in relation to the intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree. The focus is to be on future research studies. The experts are to consider the planned activities set out in the individual study plan.
- Applications for and decisions on ethics approval are to be reviewed by the experts (excluding appendices to the application).
- If the application for ethics approval is written in a language other than Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English, the document must be translated by an authorised translator.
- After the seminar, the experts meet with the doctoral student and the principal supervisor/assistant supervisor(s) separately. The purpose of these meetings is to discuss their respective views of their cooperation, working conditions and communication.

² For the subject sport science with a social and educational sciences specialisation, the doctoral thesis should be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English.

b. Final review and review prior to the public defence

- Within all doctoral subject areas and specialisations, there must be an opportunity for a final review, a seminar on the introductory chapter, or similar. An internal reviewer may be used.

For compilation theses, all substudies in the thesis project should undergo a special review by the members of the examining committee prior to the public defence. Each member is asked to separately and no later than by a certain date prior to the public defence, notify the university in writing whether they, based on the quality and scope of the substudies, recommend or advise against the doctoral student defending their thesis. In the latter case, they must also include the reasons why. Such information must be communicated to the doctoral student without delay. Note that the recommendation for or advice against a public defence made by the members of the examining committee at the review stage does not determine whether the thesis will be awarded a Pass or Fail as the final grade.

c. Doctoral thesis

- The doctoral thesis should be written in English³.
- Journal(s) must be contacted prior to the public defence for permission to publish the paper and pictures/tables in the thesis.
- The introductory chapter should be submitted for language editing.
- A scientific paper must not be included in more than two theses. The scientific contribution made by each doctoral student must be clearly indicated in the thesis.
- A compilation thesis should contain three to five substudies and correspond to four years of full-time study at the doctoral level. The doctoral student must be the lead author of at least three of the substudies. At least two substudies must have been published or accepted for publication in refereed journals. Co-lead authorship is accepted but the doctoral student's contributions must then be described in detail to allow the examining committee to assess the extent to which the doctoral student's work meet the intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree. A systematic overview paper or meta-analysis may be included in the thesis.
- A doctoral thesis at Örebro University may in certain cases take the format of a monograph.
- In accordance with the faculty [publication policy](#), the doctoral student needs to have Örebro University as affiliation for all substudies included in the thesis.

d. Plagiarism checks

- A plagiarism check must be done on the introductory chapter. The doctoral student is responsible for submitting the text for a plagiarism check with assistance from the

³ For the subject sport science with a social and educational sciences specialisation, the doctoral thesis should be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, or English.

study and research administrator. The generated report will be reviewed by the head of subject or subject coordinator. If there are any queries regarding the analysis result, the head of subject or specialisation coordinator will communicate with the supervisor.

- A plagiarism check should be run on all hand-in assignments on doctoral courses at Örebro University. The responsibility for ensuring this process lies with the course coordinator.

e. Ethics review and proposal for the public defence

- An ethics review should be performed for all doctoral theses. The ethics review function set up by the MH faculty board goes through and ensures that the research that has been generated within the scope of the thesis project has been conducted in compliance with the ethics approvals awarded and any additional permits.
- A complete proposal for the public defence, including all appendices, must have reached the research study administration no later than 15 weeks prior to the planned date for the public defence. Moreover, and in addition to what is otherwise provided in university guidelines, the following documents must be attached:
 - all substudies in question and any other non-published material that is to be included in the thesis,
 - all ethics approvals awarded on which the substudies of the thesis project rest, and
 - all complete applications for ethics approval, any additional permit applications, including all appendices.
- Both applications for and decisions on ethics approval (excluding appendices to the application) must, once a decision on the public defence has been made, be reviewed by the examining committee. To the proposal for the public defence, the supervisor must add a written account of the ethics approval in relation to the execution of the research project. If the application for ethics approval is written in a language other than Swedish, Norwegian, Danish or English, the document must be translated by an authorised translator.

f. Public defence

- The chair at the defence must be an employee of Örebro University and be a docent or professor. There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors.
- The external reviewer must have at least the qualifications required for appointment as a docent or equivalent and possess expert knowledge within the subject area for the project. There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors.
- The examining committee is to consist of three (or five) members, all of which as a minimum have the qualifications required for appointment as a docent or equivalent and at least one has the qualifications required for appointment as professor. All members must possess expert knowledge within the subject area for the project.

There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors.

- The examining committee must have the ability to assess all aspects of the thesis and each member's relevant expertise must be specified in the proposal for the public defence.
- Experts from the mid-way review may be involved in the public defence, however, not in the role as external reviewer. There must be no conflicts of interest.
- Having two members of the examining committee representing the same specialisation as the subject area for the project should be avoided. It may be allowed if there are reasons for this and if a written account from the members in question can verify that there are no conflicts of interest arising between them as a result of both their participation.
- A substitute for the examining committee must be approached. There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors.
- Both sexes should be represented on the examining committee. If that is not possible, a statement outlining the grounds for this must be attached to the proposal.

4. Programme concluding with a licentiate degree

A licentiate degree is awarded *either* after the doctoral student has completed a programme of at least 120 credits within a doctoral subject area *or* after the doctoral student has completed at least 120 credits of a programme that is to conclude with a doctoral degree. For the award of the licentiate degree, the doctoral student must have received a pass grade on a scholarly paper of at least 60 credits.

a. Proposal for the public defence

The [proposal for the public defence of a licentiate thesis](#) is to be submitted to the research study administrator at the school no later than 15 weeks prior to the planned date for the licentiate seminar.

The proposal must contain:

- Nominee for chair at the seminar.
- Nominee for external reviewer. The external reviewer must have at least the qualifications required for appointment as a docent and possess expert knowledge within the subject area for the project.
- Three nominees for members of the examining committee, of which at least one must come from another higher education institution and at least one from the school in question.
 - The members of the examining committee must be researchers who have obtained their PhDs and at least two of them must be appointed docents or have the qualifications required for appointment as a docent.
 - Both sexes should be represented on the examining committee. If that is not possible, a statement outlining the grounds for this must be attached to the proposal.

- There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors for either the external reviewer, members of the examining committee, or chair.
- Nominee for a substitute member for the examining committee. There must be no conflicts of interest in relation to the doctoral student or supervisors.
- A brief account by the supervisor, describing the doctoral student's work and their contributions to the studies, as well as a certificate verifying that the student has completed the requisite examinations within the doctoral subject area.
- A list of the studies included in the licentiate thesis. This list must contain details of co-authors. It must also say whether the papers have been submitted to a journal or whether they are still manuscripts. All substudies included in the licentiate thesis are to be attached.
- All applications for and decisions on ethics approval relating to the substudies of the licentiate thesis.

b. Review prior to the licentiate seminar

A review of the substudies included in the licentiate thesis is to be done by the members of the examining committee prior to the licentiate seminar. The committee is tasked with assessing whether the quality and quantity of the substudies meet the intended learning outcomes for the award of the licentiate degree. Each member submits their assessment to the school separately and in writing, either recommending or advising against holding the licentiate seminar. At the licentiate seminar, the committee makes a new and collective assessment of the licentiate thesis as a whole. The examining committee also review applications for and decisions on ethics approval.

c. Licentiate thesis

- The licentiate thesis should be written in English⁴.
- Journal(s) must be contacted prior to the licentiate seminar for permission to publish the paper and pictures/tables in the thesis.
- A licentiate thesis should consist of an introductory chapter based on at least two substudies, of which at least one has been published or accepted for publication in a refereed journal at the time of submission of the proposal for the public defence of a licentiate thesis.
- The doctoral student must be the lead author of at least one of the substudies. Co-lead authorship is accepted but what is key for the examining committee's assessment of the thesis is the contribution made by the doctoral student and how it corresponds to the intended learning outcomes for the award of the degree.
- A systematic overview paper or meta-analysis may be included in the thesis.

⁴ For the subject sport science with a social and educational sciences specialisation, the licentiate thesis should be written in Swedish, Norwegian, Danish, or English.

- A licentiate thesis at Örebro University may in certain cases take the format of a monograph.
- The introductory chapter should be submitted for language editing.
- In accordance with the faculty [publication policy](#), the doctoral student needs to have Örebro University as affiliation for all substudies included in the thesis.

d. Plagiarism checks

A plagiarism check must be done on the introductory chapter. The doctoral student is responsible for submitting the text for a plagiarism check with assistance from the study and research administrator. The generated report will be reviewed by the head of subject or subject coordinator. If there are any queries regarding the analysis result, the head of subject or specialisation coordinator will communicate with the supervisor.

e. Licentiate seminar

- The external reviewer is tasked with critically reviewing the licentiate thesis and discussing the content with the author of the thesis.
- After the seminar, the examining committee are to ask questions relating to the content of the thesis with the purpose of assessing whether the intended learning outcomes for the award of the licentiate degree have been met. Other attendees in the seminar will also be given the opportunity to ask questions.
- The examining committee will convene immediately after the part of the seminar that is public. The committee will appoint a chair from among its members and will grade the thesis using either of the grades Pass or Fail.
- The chair, principal supervisor, and assistant supervisor may be present and take part in the discussions at the meeting but not in the decision. Minutes must be taken, which are to be signed by the chair of the examining committee.
- The faculty issues a licentiate degree certificate upon submission of the minutes from the examining committee's meeting and completion of other components.

5. Enter into force

These guidelines will enter into force on 3 June 2024.