

Short instruction for pre-reviewers and opponents of PhD theses

Institute of Computer Science, University of Tartu

Important contacts

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- [Heili Kase \(heili.kase@ut.ee\)](mailto:heili.kase@ut.ee), secretary (bookings and payments)

Pre-review

A pre-review must evaluate the content of the thesis and make a clear and motivated statement whether the thesis, in the reviewer's opinion, is worthy of being defended or not. Pre-reviewers are encouraged to recommend improvements to the thesis in their review. If needed, important changes may also be required before the thesis can be accepted for defense. A detailed list of requirements imposed on PhD theses by the University of Tartu can be found in the Procedure for Awarding Doctorates (part IV, § 14 in particular).

Each pre-reviewer writes an independent review on the thesis. The pre-review must be written in English and sent by e-mail to the secretary of the Defence Council of the Institute.

Opponent's report

An opponent's report (2–3 pp) should comment on the scientific significance of the thesis, as well as its technical qualities, and discuss the strong and weak points of the thesis. It should also point out significant and important theoretical or experimental details of the work. The report must make a clear statement, motivated by the rest of the report, as to whether the author of the thesis, in the opponent's opinion, deserves a PhD degree in computer science in the case of successful defense.

The regulations allow the same person to serve as a pre-reviewer and an opponent of the same thesis. In such case, the opponent's report may copy parts of the pre-review that are relevant to the final version of the thesis.

The report should also include the main questions and concerns that the opponent plans to raise during the defense.

Each opponent writes an independent report. The opponent's report must be written in English and sent by e-mail to the secretary of the Defence Council at least three days before the defence date. The early deadline allows the opponents to raise questions that require the doctoral candidate to prepare before the defence, e.g. by consulting literature, for being able to answer them. The opponent's report should be signed.

The official version of the thesis

Pre-reviewers use a preliminary version of a thesis, as the author of it must have a chance to improve it according to the recommendations made by the pre-reviewers.

Opponents shall receive the final official version of the thesis. The secretary of the Defence Council shall send a link to an electronic copy of the thesis by e-mail to opponents. The theses are usually printed by the University of Tartu Press. Once the hard copies are ready, each opponent will get one by normal mail.

Remunerations and reimbursements

The institute will cover the opponents' travel and accommodation costs. Both pre-reviewers and opponents are paid a salary for their work. Once the Council officially nominates the opponents the secretary will contact these persons to arrange these matters.

Procedure of the defence

The defence takes place at a meeting of the Defence Council. An academic discussion between opponents and a doctoral candidate is the main part of the defence. The defence is normally open to the general public which means that close relatives, fellow students and colleagues are usually present. Formal dress is not required. The procedure for the defence is the following:

- 1) A presentation by the secretary of the Defence Council introducing the academic CV of the doctoral candidate and confirming the defence prerequisites and formal requirements of the defence procedure.
- 2) An opening statement by the Head of the Defence Council.
- 3) A presentation by the doctoral candidate (*lectio praecursoria*) to introduce the main results of the thesis (30 min), possibly followed by a short session of questions about the presentation.
- 4) Statements by opponents and an academic debate between them and the doctoral candidate.
- 5) A general academic debate with the participation of the Council and the audience, including speech(es) by the supervisor(s).
- 6) Final remarks by the doctoral candidate (1 min).
- 7) A closed discussion between Council members, the secretary, opponents and supervisors which results with the decision of the Council as to whether to award the doctoral degree or not.
- 8) The announcement of the decision.

The defence is held in English.

There is no official limit as to the duration of the academic debate with opponents. However, the whole procedure, including the candidate's presentation and the closed session, should normally take 2–2.5 hours.

The decision is made by the Defence Council of the Institute. The opponents are not officially members of the Defence Council. Their role during the decision-making procedure is to give their motivated recommendation to the Council.