

Evaluation of quality and progress of PhD Projects Guidelines for PhD programme in social sciences

Listed below are guidelines for Evaluation of the research process in the middle and at the end of the dissertation work, in the form of 50% - and 90% - seminars for the PhD programme in social sciences, revised on May 3rd, 2018. All PhD students admitted after the January 1st, 2017 are covered by these guidelines. PhD students admitted by and before January 1, 2017 are only covered by the 90% seminar guidelines.

50% - seminar

The text presented and evaluated at the seminar ought to be relatively comprehensive and must at least contain a draft of the introductory sections together with a start of the analysis or draft articles. The text must be made available to the commentator to weeks before the seminar.

The main supervisor chairs the seminar and begins by introducing the candidate and the commentator. The candidate then provides a brief summary and description of the project. After this, the commentator discusses the project with the candidate. The commentator assesses the project's strengths, possible misunderstandings and weaknesses and provides constructive input on how the project can be improved. Special emphasis is placed on:

- placing the PhD project within its field of research, its contribution to this field, as well as the project's practical value/impact.
- addressing any ethical challenges, considerations and choices.
- the project's progress.

The main aim of the 50% seminar is to provide an opportunity for a discussion of the project while major changes and developments are still possible. Proposals for how the work may be developed and strengthened should be followed up in a subsequent dialogue between the candidate, the supervisor(s) and the commentator(s).

90% - seminar

Prior to the 90% seminar, the candidate's manuscript (The introductory chapter of a compilation thesis (Norwegian: kappen) and articles) should have been evaluated by an experienced commentator (senior researcher). The text must be available to the commentator three weeks before the seminar.

As with the 50% seminar, the candidate gives a presentation of the work before the commentator(s) discusses the submitted manuscript with the candidate.

The purpose of the 90% seminar is to evaluate the project in its final stage and provide feedback for a nearly finished manuscript. The seminar gives the candidate the opportunity to discuss the research project in detail and prepare for the eventual defence of the dissertation.

Practical guidelines

a. Practical guidelines for the 50% - seminar (about 1.5 hours)

The 50% seminar is conducted after half the doctoral period has been completed (measured in time). The seminar is public and announced at the department where the candidate belongs.

The candidate's responsibilities:

- The texts that form the basis for the seminar must be available for the commentator two weeks before the seminar, and should be approved by the main supervisor.
- The texts must contain a draft of the initial part of the dissertation (introduction, theoretical/analytical framework, methodology), and a draft sample of the analysis (e.g. a draft chapter or article).
- At the seminar, the candidate will give a brief summary of the dissertation work (max. 45 min.).

The main supervisors' responsibilities:

- The main supervisor takes the initiative for the seminar and announces it at the department.
- The main supervisor is responsible for engaging a commentator. It is important to note that commentators on 50% - and 90% seminars cannot be appointed as members of the final evaluation committee that will assess the submitted dissertation (Cf. UiS PhD guidelines §15,4.1 section).
- The main supervisor leads the seminar. Immediately after the seminar, the commentator produces a report (1-2 pages) of the seminar, or a meeting between supervisors, commentator and candidate.
- The main supervisor is responsible for the follow-up of the commentator's comments.
- The main supervisor writes a confirmation letter of the completed 50% seminar. The confirmation letter must be enclosed with the application for approval of the instruction component.

Guidelines for the commentator:

- There should primarily be one commentator, usually from the candidate's own department.
- The candidate should receive constructive feedback that will be useful for the work ahead.
- The main part of the seminar ought to be spent on this assessment, but some time should be set aside for a general discussion in the auditorium.
- After the seminar, the candidate, supervisors and commentator meet for a further discussion.
- An evaluation of the project's progress is an important part of the commentator's task.

b. Practical guidelines for the 90% - seminar

The 90% - seminar will be conducted when the dissertation is approximately 90 percent completed. The seminar is public and announced at the department where the candidate belongs.

The candidate's responsibilities:

- The text to be submitted for the seminar must be approved by the supervisors.
- A complete manuscript for the 90% - seminar must be available for the commentator three weeks before the seminar.
- At the seminar, the candidate gives a brief summary of the dissertation work (max. 45 min.).

The supervisors' responsibilities:

- The main supervisor takes the initiative for the seminar and announces it at the department.
- The main supervisor is responsible for engaging a qualified commentator(s). It is important to note that commentators on 50% - and 90% seminars cannot be appointed as members of the final evaluation committee that will assess the submitted dissertation (Cf. UiS PhD guidelines §15,4.1 section).
- The main supervisor leads the seminar.
- The main supervisor writes a confirmation letter of the completed 90% seminar. The confirmation letter must be enclosed with the application for submission of the PhD-thesis.

Guidelines for the commentator:

- The commentator's responsibility is to assess and provide critical and constructive views on the dissertation in order to allow the candidate to improve the work at its final stage and prepare the candidate for the defense. The commentator should not spend time summarizing the work, but devote most of the time to a critical consideration and discussion of the work.
- The main part of the seminar ought to be spent on the discussion between the commentator and the candidate, but there should also be opportunities for questions and comments from the audience.
- Enough time should be allocated after the seminar for a follow-up discussion between the candidate, the supervisors and the commentator.