

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PRELIMINARY EXAMINER OF A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION AT THE FACULTY OF SPORT AND HEALTH SCIENCES

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The task of the preliminary examiners is to ensure that the manuscripts that make it to the public examination stage meet the doctoral dissertation requirements of the University of Jyväskylä and that the scientific quality of the work meets the minimum requirements set for the approval of the dissertation.

QUICK GUIDE FOR PRE-EXAMINERS

- Fill in the *dissertation evaluation form* and write a [*statement of about 3–4 pages*](#) in which you present whether permission for the public examination of the dissertation should be granted or rejected and assess the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript. To write the statement, use the template provided on the evaluation form.
 - If you wish, you may also present your view on whether the dissertation is among the best (top 5%) in the field.
 - The evaluation form has been sent to the pre-examiners by email.
- Return the statement and completed evaluation form to [*doctoral-dissertations@jyu.fi*](mailto:doctoral-dissertations@jyu.fi) *within one month of the appointment and receipt of the manuscript*.
 - Remember to sign the document, an electronic signature is also acceptable.
- Detailed instructions for the task: [*The pre-examination process and the pre-examiner's task*](#).

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION REQUIREMENTS

The doctoral dissertation requirements are available in full on the University of Jyväskylä website: [*Dissertation requirements | University of Jyväskylä*](#). Below is a summary of the key requirements.

Definition and scientific criteria

The dissertation must be a research-based, coherent scientific presentation in the doctoral candidate's field of study. The dissertation must demonstrate the doctoral candidate's critical thinking, in-depth knowledge of their research area, and mastery and ability to apply the methods of scientific research. It must contain new scientific knowledge and substantiated results, and it must be scientifically convincing, honest and follow the norms of research integrity.

Structure of the dissertation

An article-based dissertation consists of articles which discuss the same set of problems and a summarising report. It may contain peer-reviewed scientific articles which have been published or accepted for publication, or manuscripts that are under scientific peer review or ready to be submitted to the peer review process. *An article-based dissertation must contain*

at least two, typically three to four peer-reviewed scientific publications or manuscripts, of which at least one is published or accepted for publication.

The number of articles and manuscripts sufficient for an article dissertation is affected by the proportion of the author's independent work, as well as the a) extent, b) scientific quality and significance and c) publication type (publication [type A of the publication classification of the Ministry of Education and Culture – peer-reviewed scientific articles](#)). The Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences recommends that the article-based dissertation includes at least one article in the A1 or A3 publication category that contains new results or information. In addition, the dissertation may include articles in publication categories A2 or A4.

The summarising report of the article-based dissertation includes the set of questions connecting the articles, links to relevant literature, theoretical framework, methods, results and conclusions of the sub-studies, and an assessment of their impact. The summarising report must form a concise, balanced entity that has been compiled on the basis of both the articles and possible manuscripts included in the dissertation as well as the literature. The summarising report does not have to include new scientific knowledge that has not been presented in the articles.

A monograph dissertation is a previously unpublished, comprehensive scientific research work conducted solely in the author's name. The author may publish articles related to the dissertation topic before the actual dissertation is completed and may refer to them in the dissertation.

Extent of independent work

The doctoral candidate's independent work must be identifiable in all dissertations and *clearly described in the summarising report of the dissertation*. If the dissertation contains co-authored articles or manuscripts, the doctoral candidate must provide an explanation of the extent of their independent contribution to each joint publication in the summarising report. At the end of the description of the author's independent contribution it must be mentioned whether artificial intelligence-based applications have been used in the writing of the dissertation. If AI-based applications have been used, this must be described in the dissertation.

In an article-based dissertation at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences, the doctoral candidate must be the first author of at least one article. The dissertation may also include articles in which the first authorship is shared with another author or in which someone else is the first author. The supervisor may be a co-author of the articles but cannot be the first author.

THE PRE-EXAMINATION PROCESS AND THE PRE-EXAMINER'S TASK

Appointing the pre-examiners

The faculty appoints at least two pre-examiners with a doctoral degree who are professors or have demonstrated sufficient academic merit in other ways. The pre-examiners must be from outside the University of Jyväskylä. A supervisor or follow-up group member of the dissertation cannot act as a pre-examiner.

The appointment of pre-examiners must comply with the impartiality requirement laid down in the Administrative Procedure Act. They must not be in a relationship with the doctoral candidate that could call their impartiality into question.

The dissertation supervisor must check for any potential disqualification before appointing the pre-examiners. *If a pre-examiner suspects they may be disqualified, they must contact the Support for Doctoral Studies Team as soon as possible, doctoral-dissertations@jyu.fi.*

Pre-examination materials and communication

The Support for Doctoral Studies Team will provide the manuscript and pre-examination instructions for the pre-examiners appointed by the faculty. *Pre-examiners must not accept revised versions of the manuscript or any other material directly from the doctoral candidate or the supervisor.*

The pre-examiners and the doctoral candidate may not communicate with each other. Communication (if necessary) must take place through the Support for Doctoral Studies Team. The pre-examiner must mention it in their pre-examination statement if they have been in contact with the doctoral candidate during the examination process.

Plagiarism detection and suspected violation of good scientific practice

The manuscript is checked using plagiarism detection software (Turnitin) before it is sent to the pre-examiners. Pre-examiners may request access to the report. If there is a suspected violation of the responsible conduct of research in a dissertation submitted for preliminary examination, the pre-examiners must follow the University's guidelines for handling suspected cases of research misconduct: [Rector's decision on ethical guidelines for studying and the handling of academic misconduct at the University of Jyväskylä \(21.8.2023\)](#) .

Pre-examination statement

Within one month of their appointment, the preliminary examiners must submit a written statement of approximately 3–4 pages, evaluating whether the manuscript meets the doctoral dissertation requirements of the University of Jyväskylä and whether it can be granted permission for public

examination. The preliminary examination concerns the dissertation as a whole; therefore, the evaluation of an article-based dissertation must also include the articles included in the work (published and unpublished). The template for the pre-examination statement can be found on the faculty's *dissertation evaluation form*, which the pre-examiner fills in.

The statement must clearly indicate whether permission for public examination is granted or rejected. It must also include an assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the manuscript. The statement cannot be conditional. The pre-examiner may not require changes to the dissertation; instead, the manuscript must be either accepted or rejected in its current form. While the pre-examiner may suggest additions, corrections or language revisions, these suggestions must be such that permission for public examination can be granted regardless of whether the proposed changes are implemented. If the dissertation does not meet the minimum requirements for acceptance, the pre-examiner must recommend that permission for public examination be denied. The pre-examiners do not present a grade for the dissertation; their task is to evaluate whether permission for public examination is granted or rejected.

As it contains previously unpublished content, the dissertation manuscript cannot be processed using artificial intelligence tools.

The pre-examiner's task ends with a statement. The student and the supervisor-in-charge discuss possible corrections or changes to the manuscript before the public examination and the publication of the dissertation. Following the pre-examination, changes can only be made if they are suggested by the examiners. Significant changes, such as adding, removing or changing articles, are not permitted. Technical revisions to the dissertation are allowed, such as editing the language, abstract and summary.

The pre-examiners may submit individual statements or, if they prefer, a joint statement. The pre-examination statement must be written in the language of the dissertation or in English.

The statement addressed to the Faculty Council must include the details of the doctoral candidate, the doctoral dissertation and the pre-examiner (name, affiliation) and it must include the signature of the pre-examiner.

Content of the statement and the areas to be assessed (as applicable, considering the discipline of the dissertation):

1. The basic idea, research design, and problem formulation

- Assessment of the research background and objectives, the relevance and clarity of the problem formulation, the positioning of the research within the scholarly tradition of the discipline, and the justification of its suitability as a doctoral dissertation.

2. Knowledge of the research field

- Assessment of the doctoral candidate's knowledge of the topic, the critical and

coherent treatment of the subject, the comprehensiveness of the approach, and the clarity of the scope and limitations.

3. Research methods and data

- Assessment of the applicability and scope of the methods used, the sufficiency of the data, and any methodological advancements.

4. Research results and their presentation

- Assessment of the results and their significance, as well as the clarity of their presentation.

5. Discussion and conclusions

- Assessment of the relevance, clarity, and critical nature of the discussion, including ethical considerations, and whether the candidate has integrated their findings with existing knowledge, provided well-founded conclusions, and identified new research questions.

6. Structure, coherence, and refinement of the dissertation

- Assessment of the overall scope of the dissertation, the balanced presentation of its components, and the refinement and finalization of the text.

7. Contribution of independent work

- Assessment of the doctoral candidate's share of independent work.

8. Publications (assessed only in article-based dissertations)

- In the case of an article-based dissertation, assessment of the formation of a coherent scientific whole.

Pre-examiner's summary and justifications for the proposal regarding permission for public examination

- The statement concludes with a summary outlining the aim of the study, the key methodological features, the main findings and conclusions, and providing an overview of the quality and significance of the research. In the summary, the pre-examiner must present the key justifications for granting/denying permission for public examination. If the pre-examiner presents that the dissertation is among the best (top 5%) in the field, this proposal must also be justified.

Submission of the pre-examination statement and the pre-examiner's fee

The statement must be submitted within one month of the appointment and receipt of the manuscript, unless another time has been agreed upon when requesting consent for the position. After the appointment, the Dean of the Faculty or a person designated by the Dean may extend the term for a justified reason.

The signed evaluation form and written statement is addressed to the Faculty Council and sent as a pdf or docx file to the Support for Doctoral Studies Team at the e-mail address doctoral-dissertations@jyu.fi (not to the doctoral candidate or supervisor). The Support for Doctoral Studies Team forwards the statement to the doctoral candidate, the supervisor-in-charge,

the Faculty Council and, if permission to defend the dissertation is granted, also to the opponent and assessment board.

The pre-examiner will be paid a fee determined by the University of Jyväskylä. Instructions on the payment of the fee will be sent to the pre-examiner by email when the faculty has received the final pre-examination statement.

Decision-making

Once the faculty has received both pre-examination statements, the Faculty Council decides whether to grant permission for public examination. The doctoral candidate will be given the opportunity to respond to the statements before the decision is made. The doctoral candidate has the right to discontinue the pre-examination process before the Faculty Council's processing. Permission to defend the public examination is granted on the basis of the statements of the preliminary examiners.

- If both statements are positive, permission for the public examination is usually granted. The faculty then decides on the public examination and appoints an opponent, who may be one of the pre-examiners (with their consent) or another qualified person, and an assessment board for the dissertation.
- If both statements are negative, the pre-examination process is discontinued either at the request of the doctoral candidate or by the decision of the Faculty Council. If one statement is positive and the other negative, a third pre-examiner may be appointed, or the candidate may choose to discontinue the process before the Faculty Council's review; otherwise, the Faculty Council will decide on how the process should proceed.
- If the pre-examination process is discontinued, the doctoral candidate may request a new pre-examination after making the necessary revisions. New pre-examiners may be appointed, or the same pre-examiners may be reappointed.

GRADING SCALE

The dissertation must meet the following scientific criteria and requirements for learning and competence. The dissertation must:

- include new scientific knowledge and substantiated results as well as be scientifically convincing;
- demonstrate the candidate's critical thinking, profound knowledge of the research field, command of scientific research methods and ability to apply them as well as
- be scientifically honest and follow the norms of research integrity.

The Faculty Council decides on the final grade of the dissertation on a three-step scale of "

Fail – Pass – Pass with distinction" after the public examination, based on the statements of the dissertation made by the opponent/s and the assessment board. The pre-examination statements are also given to the Faculty Council for their information.

The dissertation is graded at the Faculty of Sport and Health Sciences on the following scale:

"Pass with distinction"

The grade "Pass with distinction" is only given to work of an extremely high standard, and which belongs to the top 5% in the research area. The grade "Pass with distinction" requires that all of the following criteria are fulfilled:

- The thesis is scientifically outstanding.
- The thesis clearly advances theory and understanding in the research area.
- The observations and conclusions of the thesis are essentially new.
- The results are extremely significant in the research area.
- The scientific articles from the thesis are published in high quality international scientific journals and the thesis chapters are excellently presented (literature review, methods, results and discussion).
- The candidate played a significant and independent role in obtaining the results.
- The candidate defended the thesis excellently in the public PhD defence.

"Pass"

The scientific contribution of the work satisfies the requirements of a PhD thesis:

- The aims are clearly defined; the theoretical framework and empirical part of the work conform to accepted practices in the research field.
- The conclusions are supported by the results obtained.
- Ethical aspects have been adequately addressed.
- The candidate has shown, both in the thesis and the PhD defence, a good understanding of their own research field and its societal significance.
- They have also demonstrated competence in their research area, having independently and critically used scientific methods to generate new scientific knowledge.

"Fail"

The work contains clear deficiencies in several of the following areas:

- The aims are not clearly defined.
- The work does not make sufficient scientific contribution.
- Both the theoretical framework and the empirical part of the work contain serious

deficiencies or problems.

- The conclusions are not supported by the results obtained.
- The ethical aspects of the research have not been adequately addressed.