Guidelines for Preparing a Reviewer's Opinion on a Doctoral Thesis

A reviewer opinion is a scientific assessment of a doctoral thesis, conducted by an independent external expert. The opinion supports the defence process by helping to highlight and to prepare their statements and arguments in favour of their doctoral thesis.

Reviewer opinion are expected to offer insights with respect to

- the main strengths and potential limitations of the doctoral thesis,
- position of the thesis within the relevant field of research or professional practice, and
- its scholarly or applied contribution.

It is important to note that doctoral candidates are not expected to rewrite their thesis based on reviewer opinion. It is an overall assessment within the context of the public defence, carrying supportive rather than decisive weight in the final decision-making process.

The reviewer's opinion must be submitted to the academic affairs specialist (urve.soonets@ut.ee), signed either by hand or digitally, no later than five working days before the public defence.

Sample structure of the opponent's review

Author of the doctoral thesis:

Title of the doctoral thesis:

Supervisor(s):

Reviewer: *name, position, institution*

Date:

1. General Assessment of the Content, Relevance and Contribution of the Doctoral Thesis

Generally, the reviewer provides a general assessment of the topic of the doctoral thesis. This assessment includes evaluating - the significance of the research problem in the context of existing literature, research questions, key concepts, research methodology, presentation and discussion of findings. The reviewer also evaluates the implication of the doctoral research with respect to its scholarly, professional, methodological, empirical, or applied contribution. The reviewer additionally offers insight related to the novelty of the work, the significance of its findings, its relationship to previous research literature or professional practice in the field, and/or its relevance to the corresponding field of research.

2. Strengths and Possible Limitations

The reviewer is expected to identify the most important strengths of the thesis and, where relevant, highlight any limitations which is relevant to a scholarly discussion of the thesis. In cases where the reviewer identifies substantive errors related to methodology, data analysis, or data interpretation - the reviewer is expected to reflect on these errors in their opinion. In such cases, the reviewer formulates their opinion in a scientific manner, i.e., explaining the problem logically, offering insight from existing literature, and outlining the implication of such error. The reviewer's comments allowsallow for the doctoral candidate to prepare her/his argument, and/or consider future studies to mitigate the limitations.

In writing the reviewer opinion, it is strongly discouraged to provide a detailed list of corrections or instructions for rewriting the thesis. However, the opinion should enable the defence committee and the doctoral candidate to understand which questions or limitations require substantive discussion during the defence.

3. Assessment of the Written Component's Compliance with the Requirements

The reviewer provides an opinion on whether, in their assessment, the written component of the doctoral thesis meets the general academic requirements applicable to doctoral theses. The assessment may address the overall coherence, structure, argumentation, use of sources, methodological transparency, presentation of results, justification of conclusions, and formal accuracy of the work.

Concluding Assessment

Suggested wording:

"In the reviewer's assessment, the written component of the doctoral thesis meets / broadly meets the academic requirements applicable to doctoral theses."

Name of reviewer:

Signature: [reviewer's signature / digital signature]