

Short instruction for pre-reviewers and opponents of PhD theses Institute of Mathematics and Statistics, University of Tartu

Important contacts:

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- Liina Jürimaa (liina.jurimaa@ut.ee), Secretary of the Defence Council

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. Prereviewers 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 [Regulations for Doctoral Studies](#).

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 Head of the Institute of Mathematics and Statistics.

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 mathematics or mathematical statistics 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 relevant parts of the pre-review.

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-mails** (meelis.kaarik@ut.ee and liina.jurimaa@ut.ee) **at least one week 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 report should be signed and given to the secretary of the Defence Council after the defence.

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 an electronic copy of the thesis by e-mail to opponents. The theses are 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. Opponents are paid a salary for their work. Once the Council officially nominates the opponents the Head of the Institute of Mathematics and Statistics 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.

The procedure for the defence is the following:

- 1) An opening statement by the Chairman of the Defence Committee
- 2) 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.
- 3) A presentation by the doctoral candidate to introduce the main results of the thesis (30 min) and a short session of questions about the presentation. The defence is held in English.
- 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) A closed discussion between Council members, the secretary, opponents and supervisor(s) which results with the decision of the Council as to whether to award the doctoral degree or not.
- 7) The announcement of the decision.
- 8) Final remarks by the doctoral candidate (1 min).

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.