Public examination of the dissertation at Medical Faculty of University of Tartu

1. Public examination of the dissertation takes place at the meeting of the Council of Medical Faculty. The typical locations for the meetings of public examination of dissertations are Ravila 19 (rooms 1006 or 1038) or L. Puusepa 8 (Linkberg’s lecture hall).

2. The meeting may only begin in case when at least six members of the Council of the Medical Faculty (later in the text “Council”) are present.

3. If the Opponent is not an Estonian speaker the public examination takes place in English language. This requirement does not apply to the following parts of the procedure: opening remarks, introduction of the PhD candidate (Candidate), opinion of supervisor and acknowledgements by Candidate (see paragraph 17). If preferable, the questions by the members of council and other audience may be asked in Estonian (see paragraph 12 and 13).

4. Chairman of the Council opens the meeting and asks the Opponent to sit and Candidate to stand in the space provided. Candidate, chairman of the Council and Opponent must have a dark suit for men and long-sleeved dress or costume for women (preferably black).

5. Secretary of the Council introduces Candidate to the Council, submitting the following information: curriculum vitae, job, number of publications, completion of the curriculum.

6. Candidate presents standing the lectio praecursoria - up to 20 min.

7. Chairman of the Council welcomes and introduces briefly respectable Opponent and asks him to give an opinion and comments on the dissertation.

8. Opponent stands up and presents short introductory overview, illustrated with slides if desired, with regard to the scientific importance of the thesis, accomplishment of the dissertation, adding general comments.

9. Opponent and Candidate take a seat and start an academic discussion. Opponent starts questioning the Candidate for more detailed criticism regarding purpose of the study, and the questions of methodological issues as well as of general nature of the study, and then treating the text in detail.

10. Opponent can spend preferably one to one and a half hours questioning the Candidate.

11. At the end of the discussion, the opponent stands up and presents the summary, the Candidate stands listening.
12. Chairman of the Council gives the Council members an opportunity to ask the Candidate questions and remarks regarding the thesis.

13. Chairman of the Council gives the rest of the audience an opportunity to ask the Candidate questions and remarks regarding the thesis.

14. Chairman of the Council asks the Candidate’s Supervisor(s) to present a brief statement about the preparation of thesis as well as about the Candidate.

15. Chairman of the Council asks the Council members to gather for closed discussion and decision-making (through the voting procedure) on the outcome of the public examination, normally held in the premises next to the lecture hall.

16. After the voting procedure, the Council resumes at the public examination room and the Chairman of the Council announces the decision of the Council.

17. The Candidate presents his/her final word, thanking the University, the Chairman and members of the Council, Opponent, reviewers, supervisor(s), colleagues and family.

18. Chairman of the Council terminates the procedure of public examination, congratulating the Candidate on receiving the Ph.D. degree in the field of medical science.
Guidelines for the Opponent

In the Opponent’s assessment of the doctoral dissertation, special attention should be paid to the following points:

Evaluation of:

- the topic of dissertation, number of problems to be solved and their importance for medical sciences and everyday practice.
- Candidate’s familiarity with relevant literature, critical appraisal of other work. Has the Candidate made the links between the review and his/her design of the study explicit?
- the originality in both the planning and the execution of the research.
- Is the methodology for data collection appropriate and are the methods used for analysis appropriate?
- the amount and the quality of the material of the dissertation. Is the thesis substantially the Candidate’s own work?
- Is the level and form of analysis appropriate to the data?
- Are the results presented in a clear way?
- Have the hypothesis in fact been tested, do the solutions obtained relate to the questions posed?
- Whether the conclusions are drawn adequately, is the Candidate aware of possible limits to confidence/reliability/validity in the study?
- Is there evidence of attempts at theory building or reconceptualization of problems?
- Does the study add to existing knowledge of the subject?
- the structuring of the dissertation, its manner of presentation, the style and use of language (both English and Estonian).
- the quality of publications. Do the publications reflect the main objectives/results?
- Has the Candidate developed skills in research at this level?

For conclusion the Opponent is asked to give a decision whether the Candidate is worth the degree of Doctor of Medical Sciences on the basis of the dissertation.