

Model letter 4 – Instructions to chair and members Assessment Committee

To: Chair Assessment committee,
members Assessment committee:
From: Principal Supervisor:
Cc: Dean of the Faculty, UM PhD Office:
Date:
Reference: *Doctoral candidate:*
Subject: Instructions for the assessment of the doctoral thesis of:
Attachments: Assessment form for the doctoral thesis, doctoral thesis

Dear colleagues,

First of all, let me thank you for your willingness to participate in the assessment committee of the doctoral thesis _____ of _____. A copy of the thesis is included with this letter. In this letter, we inform you about the procedure, and what is expected of you. Members of the assessment committee are:

Title and Name chair:

Chair/Function:

Affiliation:

Mobile phone:

Email address:

Title and Name:

Chair/Function:

Affiliation:

Mobile phone:

Email address:

Title and Name:

Chair/Function:

Affiliation:

Mobile phone:

Email address:

Title and Name:
 Chair/Function:
 Affiliation:
 Mobile phone:
 Email address:

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Attached to this letter is an assessment form that I ask you to complete. The first page of the form gives you all information you need for the assessment. Please read this carefully. A few key features of the procedure are highlighted here.

First, you are asked to form a judgement using the assessment form within **four weeks** after you receive this letter. Members should send the filled-out forms to the chair, including a short motivation of the proposed verdict of approximately 300 words.

Key in your judgement is whether the thesis is acceptable for admission to the defence. You have **three options** for a judgement:

- Unconditionally admissible;
- Conditionally admissible, minor revisions required;
- Not admissible.

Once the chair has received the assessments of all members of the committee, the chair has to assemble an overall assessment. The same three assessments as mentioned above are possible.

The chair is bound to judge the thesis admissible, if at most one of the members of the committee assesses the thesis not admissible.

The consequences of 'Conditionally admissible with minor revisions' is that the doctoral candidate is asked to make the minor changes. It is important that 'minor revisions' should indeed be minor. Asking for an additional experiment, an extra chapter, additional analyses etc. do not qualify as minor revisions. Hence, when you think that such major revisions are necessary to qualify for admission to the defence, you should judge 'not admissible'.

In the case of minor revisions, I (i.e. the supervisor) will see to the minor changes being realized. Subsequently, the thesis will be admitted to the defence without a second round of assessment. Changes that are proposed should be feasible within a reasonable period.

In case the judgement of the committee is 'not admissible', the chair is asked to consult the supervisor to discuss how to proceed. In principle, the thesis should be withdrawn, but it is of course possible that after major revisions the thesis will again be submitted. When the thesis is resubmitted within six months after the first judgement was communicated to the supervisor, the thesis will be assessed by the same committee, consequently you will be asked to assess this revised version.

Every member is also asked to consider whether the thesis is of quality high enough to be a candidate to receive the **distinction 'cum laude'**. Note that this is a standard procedure, and that the fact that it is mentioned in this letter, does not signal anything about my personal opinion on this matter.

When any of the members considers the thesis of quality high enough to receive the distinction 'cum laude', they will contact the chair. Subsequently, the chair will inform the other members that each of them should judge if they consider the thesis eligible for the distinction 'cum laude'. Every member is asked to fill out a second assessment form that the chair has to send to the members.

Only if all members unanimously assess the thesis eligible for the distinction 'cum laude', the chair will have to inform the supervisor about this assessment. Upon approval of the supervisor, the chair of the assessment committee will have to contact the Rector and respective Dean to take the next steps in this procedure. Then two external experts will have to assess the thesis on the distinction 'cum laude'. Please note that the committee's judgement is formally an advice to the defence committee who will make the final judgement at the defence ceremony.

There are three more, important things to take note of:

- Members are only allowed to be in touch with anything related to the assessment with the chair. Any direct or indirect communication among other members of the committee, the supervisor or the doctoral candidate is not allowed and will jeopardize the legitimacy of the procedure. Please abide by this rule.
- The chair of the assessment committee will share the anonymized assessment forms with the supervisor and the doctoral candidate. This means that only page 2 of the assessment form will be shared. The forms that are used for the assessment of the eligibility for cum laude are not shared with the supervisor, nor the candidate.
- The chair of the assessment committee should send the original assessment forms, i.e. not anonymized forms, to the PhD Office.

Thank you once again for taking up this important task, which is a key element in the quality assurance of our doctoral degree.

Principal supervisor or (co)supervisor:

Signature:

Date: