

Recommendations of the dissertations defense working group

Recommendation 1: The working group is of the opinion that the dialogue character should be further promoted, and recommends to emphasize the aspect of dialogue and interaction further in letters to opponents.

Recommendation 2: The working group recommends to add a narrative about the intended dialogue and interaction to the instruction that chairs of PhD defense sessions receive in advance.

Recommendation 3: The working group assumes that (co-)supervisors and Graduate Schools already regularly discuss the nature and quality of the defense, but advises to pay more explicit attention to this than may now be the case.

Recommendation 4: According to Article 4.3 of the PhD Regulations, the supervisor is responsible for the supervision of the PhD researcher. This should include preparing the PhD researcher for the PhD ceremony or the defense of the thesis. The working group recommends that this should be made explicit in the PhD Regulations and included in the communication that (co-)supervisors receive upon their appointment.

Recommendation 5: The working group recommends that the topic of preparing the PhD researcher for the PhD Ceremony, in the consultation among the Vice-Deans for Research, the Rector and Vice-Rector (Research & Impact Portfolio Holders' Meeting (POZ)), should be regularly discussed, and best practices should be shared.

Recommendation 6: In the "Elaboration of some elements of the PhD Regulations for External candidates at Tilburg University" (hereinafter: the Elaboration) it is added that the (co-)supervisors stimulate and facilitate that there are sufficient moments of substantive feedback on the PhD research, by the (co-)supervisors themselves and by other academic colleagues. It is also stipulated that external PhD researchers present the research at least twice in the PhD track during a research meeting of the faculty and/or department. The working group recommends moving the aforementioned provision from the Elaboration to the PhD Regulations, so that it is clear that gaining experience with presenting, arguing, and reflecting in the form of feedback moments applies to all PhD researchers.

Recommendation 7: The working group recommends, in line with the wish of the Tilburg University PhD Platform, that the meeting "Practice your defense", which is now occasionally offered by the Graduate School of TSB in cooperation with the PhD Defenses and Academic Ceremonies Office, be offered structurally by all Graduate Schools twice a year to all PhD researchers.

Recommendation 8: The working group observes that attention to disability and functional impairment within the PhD process at Tilburg University is currently insufficiently highlighted. Therefore, the working group recommends that more attention be paid to this.

Recommendation 9: The working group recommends to include a provision in the PhD Regulations that PhD researchers with a disability or functional impairment that may affect the smooth running of the PhD defense ceremony be given the opportunity to conduct the PhD ceremony/defense in a manner adapted as far as possible to their individual functional impairment.

Recommendation 10: The working group recommends that a concise protocol be drawn up for this, with an advisory role for the DGS and a decision-making role for the Doctorate Board. The estimation is that this will involve customization and that case histories will, therefore, have to be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Recommendation 11: The working group advises the Schools to pay more attention to the implementation of the Elaboration, in which an external PhD researcher is paired with an internal PhD researcher; that external PhD researchers are invited to research discussions and social gatherings; that external PhD researchers have access to progress meetings about their PhD programs with the PhD coordinator or a similar official of the relevant Graduate School; and that the research progress of external PhD researchers is evaluated annually.

Recommendation 12: The working group sees the defense as the final check to assess whether the PhD researcher has indeed met the assessment criteria from the PhD Regulations and recommends that this be explicitly included in the PhD Regulations, making it clear that the assessment criteria apply to the entire PhD program and not only to the thesis.

Recommendation 13: According to the work group it is crucial to further make explicit in the PhD Regulations the voting ratio at which the granting of the PhD, in the case of a thesis approved beforehand by definition, but having heard the defense, will not proceed. The working group recommends assuming unanimity among the voting members present.

Recommendation 14: The working group further recommends that the manner of voting be made explicit in the PhD Regulations.

Recommendation 15: The working group advises to include in the PhD Regulations that in case it is decided not to award the PhD after the defense, the chair of the Doctorate Board, in consultation with the Doctorate Board, decides within five working days on the follow-up.