

Thesis defense procedure

This document specifies the procedure for a thesis defense within the MA program in Language and Linguistics at Lund University (HSVPV). The exact time length for each defense may differ (but should not be shorter than one hour), as well as the language in which it is to be carried out, but it applies to all specializations and both the Two Year and the One Year programs.

Prior to the defense

1. The thesis defense is announced and the thesis itself is made public at least one week in advance.
2. The opponent makes well-structured notes (ca. 2 pages) which should try to cover the same aspects that are stated in the Grading Criteria (see the corresponding document):
 - a. Research questions and aims
 - b. Relevance for the research field and in general
 - c. Theoretical background
 - d. Method
 - e. Argumentation and analysis of results
 - f. Discussion of results and conclusions
 - g. Organization and structure
 - h. Critical use of sources
 - i. Language
 - j. Formal aspects

These are to be sent to the Coordinator **prior to the defense**, and can be used as handout to the audience and respondent during the opposition phase of the defense (see below).

At the defense

1. Introduction
 - a. The chairperson (often the main supervisor) of the thesis defense welcomes all, and introduces the respondent, opponent and examiner. The time frame for the defense is specified.
 - b. The chairperson gives the respondent the opportunity to make amendments or corrections to the thesis.
2. Presentation
 - a. The respondent presents the thesis using audiovisual resources (20-30 minutes) taking up the main points, such as aims, background, material, method, analysis, results, and conclusions.
3. Opposition
 - a. The opponent then makes his/her opposition (20-30 minutes). As the thesis has already been presented, there is no need for the opponent to do so again. Rather, the opponent should first give her/his overall impression of the thesis, and then proceed through the points above, with focus on A to G. It is good if the opponent marks typos, and possible problems with formal aspects and references in

her/his copy, but unless these are major problems (like missing key references, or hard to understand language), there is no need to bring them during the opposition. *Note: It is important that the defense takes the form of a dialogue, so that when a criticism is made, for example, concerning some step in the argumentation, you can ask: "I don't see how X follows, can you maybe explain"?*

- b. The respondent should try to reply to the questions of the opponent relatively shortly, without too long explanations or "excuses".
 - c. Both the opponent and the respondent should aim at objectivity, which of course does not mean that they need to agree on everything. Criticism is to be made, and responded to, in a style that is not "aggressive".
 - d. After concluding his/her opposition, the opponent may give the respondent a list of spelling errors and other details that should be corrected, or her copy of the thesis, with these things marked.
4. Questions
- a. The examiner is given the opportunity to ask the respondent questions and comment on the thesis (5-10 minutes).
 - b. The audience is given an opportunity to ask questions and comment on the thesis.
5. Conclusion
- a. The chairperson closes the defense, and announces when and how the grade will be communicated to the respondent.
6. Deciding on the grade, and necessary revisions.
- a. The supervisor(s), examiner and if possible, the program coordinator retire to decide on the grade, and what would need to be corrected. These corrections should not be so extensive so as to change the grade of the thesis.
 - b. This decision is the communicated to the respondent orally or by email, as well as the corrections that must be made in the final version.