Best practices with regard to the final phase of the PhD

In this document the following abbreviations are used:
EC: Examination Committee
FDC: Faculty Doctoral Committee

The FDC appoints the chair of the EC before the preliminary defence takes place, preferably at the same time that the EC is approved. It is up to the faculty to decide upon the appointment procedure of the chair.

Preliminary defence:
1. The preliminary defence takes place in private and lasts no longer than 2 hours.
2. All members of the EC are expected to be present at the preliminary defence. Supervisor and doctoral candidate plan a date and time that allows all internal members of the EC to be present. If external members cannot be present, they will be invited to take part through videoconferencing (e.g. via Skype). External members who do not participate in the preliminary defence are asked to send their written analysis of the manuscript and recommendation(s) to the chair of the EC beforehand. A preliminary defence is only valid when at least half of the members of the EC directly participate in the meeting.
3. The chair explains the procedure.
4. The secretary writes a report of the meeting. Generally, a supervisor is the secretary. This report includes
   • how each member of the EC participated in the preliminary defence;
   • the decision to (not) accept the manuscript and permission to publically defend;
   • the most important elements which have led to this decision;
   • which EC members wish to further discuss the manuscript in a personal meeting with the doctoral candidate.
5. The supervisor describes how the PhD work has come about without expressing an opinion about the quality of the work (optional).
6. The doctoral candidate can give a short 15 minute presentation, if he/she wishes to do so, or if the EC requests this. In case of the latter, this request needs to be made known to the doctoral candidate beforehand.
7. The EC enters into a discussion about the manuscript with the doctoral candidate. All members of the EC need to have the opportunity to ask questions or to participate in the discussion.
8. After the preliminary defence, individual members of the EC can continue the discussion with the doctoral candidate about certain aspects of the work and discuss suggestions for modifications of the manuscript in more detail.
9. Deliberation and conclusion: The EC takes into account the submitted manuscript as well as the way in which the doctoral candidate has defended the PhD. In principle the EC takes the decision in consensus. In the exceptional case that no consensus can be reached, a voting
procedure may be used. All members of the EC present have the right to vote: decision is by simple majority. In case of equality of votes the chair’s vote will decide.

10. The EC takes one of the following decisions:

- **The manuscript is accepted as is, possibly with some adjustments.** This implies that the doctoral candidate is admitted to publically defend and a date for the public defence can be set. The doctoral candidate submits the revised manuscript and a discussion sheet to the EC before the public defence as described in the general regulations art. 8 §5 (the EC does not need to re-evaluate the manuscript itself).

- **Revision: approval with reservation.** This implies that the doctoral candidate needs to submit a revised manuscript and discussion sheet and (some members of) the EC will re-evaluate the manuscript. The EC decides on the details of the procedure (electronic procedure is possible). If members of the EC do not agree with the improvements proposed by the candidate, a new meeting of the EC and the doctoral candidate will be organised so that the EC can make a re-evaluation. The EC decides at this meeting whether the revised manuscript can be approved or whether further modifications are indeed necessary.

- **The manuscript is rejected.** The chair of the EC contacts the chair of the FDC to set up an appropriate procedure.

11. After the examination and deliberation the main decision as well as the major elements on which this decision is based are communicated to the candidate by the chair of the EC. The detailed remarks and suggestions of the members of the EC are communicated to the candidate by the individual EC members or a meeting between the doctoral candidate and individual members of the EC is set in order to discuss this.

**Final defence:** The procedure for the public defence is described in the general regulations of ADS art. 8 §5.