

PROUT

PhD Network Utrecht

The Final Hurdle: Finishing Your PhD

In addition to polishing off the content of your dissertation, there are many things to think about towards the end of your PhD. In this handout, we provide a concise overview of some of the most important issues related to the formal matters of the final months leading up to the defence. We hope this helps to make the 'final hurdle' less daunting and to reduce the stress of what is sure to be an unforgettable period in your life!

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the time schedule for arranging the defence?

6 months prior to your defence (underlined items are links which can be found on our website at <http://prout.nl/phdguide/finishing-your-phd/>):

- Read the promotion regulations and other information regarding your PhD defence.
- Fill out Form 1 for PhD candidates in Hora est. (see section below regarding the Forms)
- Decide with your promoter who will be in your assessment committee (reading committee) and who will be your opponents.
- After approval by the supervisor, ask the Beadle's Office to assign a provisional date for the doctoral thesis defence ceremony.
- Start thinking about the program of the day of your defence.

3-4 months prior to your defence

- Submit your dissertation to the assessment committee not later than 4 months (to the exact day!) prior to the day of your defence.
- Before submitting the dissertation, Form 2 has to be filled in by your promoter.
- Apply for an ISBN-number for your thesis.
- E-mail title page and back of title page for approval to Beadle's Office, at least 2.5 months before your defence.
- Do the lay out of your thesis (you may want to contact a printing company to help you out).
- Think about who will be your "paranymphs"

1-2 months prior to your defence

- After approval by the committee, Form 3 has to be filled in by the promoter.

- Send the thesis to the printer. Note that the the thesis may be sent to the printers only after acceptance of Form 3 by the Board for the Conferral of Doctoral Degrees, and after approval by the Beadle of title page and back of title page.
- Distribute your thesis, i.e, send it to promoters, daily supervisors, opponents, subsidizing organizations, colleagues, contacts outside the university, people working in the field, family, friends, etc.
- Start organizing the party and dinner. Visit the party accommodation and make the necessary reservations.
- Organize the reception after the ceremony (in the Academiegebouw or elsewhere)
- Organize a photographer, video, audiotape.

Last weeks prior to your defence

- Buy/rent clothing (a dress suit or something else)
- At least 3 weeks before your defense, hand in 15 copies of your thesis to the Beadle.
- Make sure everything is arranged for the reception, dinner, party.
- Prepare for the defence by:
 - Reading through the promotion regulations (e.g. how to approach the opponents)
 - Doing a mock defence with your colleagues
 - Reading recent literature and core literature
 - Reading comments of reviewers and your reply to that
 - Writing down strong and weak points per chapter
 - Think of possible questions per chapter
 - Read last couple of papers of members of reading committee

How much does the defence cost?

In total, the defence usually costs somewhere between €2.500 and €4.000 (depending on what kind of a party you'd like to throw). This includes the following costs:

- Printing your thesis (some faculties cover part of this expense) : €1.000-2.000
- Clothing: €150-400
- Ceremony – for a ceremony with around 70 invited guests, you can expect the reception in the Academiegebouw to cost around €600-700. The party (including drinks) will cost around €900 and the dinner at least €400.

Is there a standard layout for my dissertation?

The title page and the back of the title page have to follow very strict guidelines. Instructions can be found here:

<http://www.uu.nl/university/research/EN/phdprogrammes/Regulations/Documents/AanwijzingenEN.pdf>

What are the 'paranymphs'?

The PhD Candidate chooses two people to act as his/her 'paranymphs'. Their function is purely ceremonial, at least during the defence itself. While you're defending your dissertation in public, they will sit right behind you to give you mental support.

- The paranymphs are chosen personally by the defender.
- You will usually pick persons that you know well. These can be colleagues with whom you have worked together intensely, close friends, or family members, like brothers and sisters, except for your parents. Both parents and spouses/boy-/girlfriends are usually excluded.
- The paranymphs take part in the full ceremony. They accompany you when you enter the room where you will defend your work. They stand behind you when the committee enters the

room and they sit behind you while you're defending. In the end, after receiving your diploma and your laudation, you will leave the room with them, the committee, and possibly some loved ones (partner or parents). The other guests will follow afterwards.

- Although their function during the defence is purely ceremonial, it is usual to include the paranymphs in the whole process of organizing your defence and the surrounding festivities. They are to the PhD defence and ceremony what a best man is to a wedding.

Which forms need to be filled?

There are four forms that need to be filled in. The form 1 has to be filled in by the promoter and the candidate. Form 2,3 and 4 are to be completed by the promoter in Hora Est, the module of the research information system (Metis) for PhD candidates and supervisors.

Tips.

Planning:

Make a time table, in agreement with your supervisor, to make sure that you and your supervisor are aware of what needs to be done and when it has to be done.

Begin one year before the expected graduation date by checking whether Form 1 is properly filled in in Hora Est.

Setting the date:

From the first of a month you can call to reserve for 6 months later. Many people call that day around 9:00, so it might take a while to get the Beadle on the line and it might happen that the day you had in mind gets fully booked. Make sure then you have more than one option.

Submitting the thesis:

Before submitting the thesis to the reading committee, your advisor has to approve it, and Form 2 has to be with the Beadle. Make sure you put enough time (2 weeks is enough) in your planning between finishing your thesis and sending it to the readers.

Check out the following for more details:

<http://www.uu.nl/university/research/EN/phdprogrammes/Regulations/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://prout.nl/phdguide/finishing-your-phd/>