

GUIDELINES FOR PRELIMINARY THESIS DISSERTATIONS

A preliminary thesis dissertation (PTD) or *mémoire préliminaire de these (MPT)* is submitted to the evaluation of the thesis supervisor and second reader – or by the two co-supervisors in case of a co-direction. It is orally defended no later than the end of the third semester. A successful PTD defence is a condition to pursue the doctoral curriculum; in case of failure, a second and last defence attempt should take place within six months of the first attempt.

Important Note

These are general guidelines for PTDs at the Institute.

Please refer to specific PTD guidelines of your study programme and discuss with the head of your department as well as your supervisor on how the guidelines below may be best adapted to suit your specific topic and study programme.

General expectations regarding PTD content and structure

PTD requirements vary from one discipline to another. A PTD is a piece of written work by doctoral candidates on their PhD research project. It should reflect that candidates are knowledgeable about a particular body of scholarly literature related to their research question(s), and be accompanied by an appropriate research design. In other words, candidates are expected to demonstrate their command of the relevant literature, as well as of the relevant concepts and methods to address the research question(s) of their planned thesis. PTD shall typically include:

1. An introduction, presenting the research objective(s) and question(s) as well as how the research will contribute to existing literature.
2. A review of the relevant literature, which should be done in a critical manner rather than providing a descriptive list of relevant studies.
3. A theoretical section defining the core concepts (and hypotheses, if relevant).
4. A presentation of the research design, explaining how the research will be conducted and which methods will be used (incl. strengths and limitations of the methodological approach); discussing how the data will be generated or collected and analyzed.
5. A detailed outline of the work plan, both in terms of content and timeline
6. Feasibility and ethical considerations
7. Bibliography (alphabetic; thematic; can also be annotated)

Note that, in agreement with the department head and thesis supervisor, the PTD can also consist of a draft version of one or two chapters of the thesis. For the International Economics department, the PTD may also consist of one or two essays.

Format and quotation style¹

- Unless otherwise stipulated in specific guidelines of your study programme, there is no specific length for a PTD. A general recommendation is to limit the document to 30,000 words including footnotes, but excluding bibliography, iconography and appendices.
- Candidates can choose the reference style of their choice amongst those commonly used, as long it is applied consistently throughout the manuscript.
- Please take note of the Institute's recommendations on citations and references as well as [guidelines on plagiarism](#). PDT manuscript may be submitted to a plagiarism detecting software.

Evaluation criteria

¹Suggested reading: Cochrane John, Writing Tips for PhD Students,
http://faculty.chicagobooth.edu/john.cochrane/teaching/Papers/phd_paper_writing.pdf

- Command of the relevant literature, clarity of research focus and question(s), contribution to existing literature
- Strength and appropriateness of the research design
- Clarity, strength and feasibility of the research plan; chances of successfully completing the research and of submitting the final PhD manuscript (or set of papers) within the regulatory timeframe.
- Feasibility further includes considerations related to access to data as well as to the technical and methodological skills required to implement the proposed research design
- Writing and analytical skills as reflected in the PTD thesis; strength of the oral PTD defence.

Oral defence

- At least five days before the PTD oral defence, candidates receive the individual evaluation reports of their supervisor and second reader (or of their two co-supervisors in case of a co-direction).
- The PTD oral defence lasts approximately an hour.² It usually involves initial remarks by the candidate (between 10 to 20 minutes) followed by a discussion with the examiners. Candidates are free to choose the style and content of their oral presentation, but are advised to address the remarks made by the examiners in their written reports.

Exchanges with – and involved of – the ‘provisional’ supervisor or co-supervisors

- Supervisors must agree with students on a calendar regarding work progress, exchanges and submission of drafts.
- Students should foresee enough time between the submission of their drafts and their supervisors’ feedbacks followed by manuscript revisions.
- The supervisor is expected to give a feedback on the manuscript plan in a reasonable timeframe.
- The supervisor chooses the second reader (in principle from the same department) who will then act as the ‘internal examiner’ of the thesis’ committee.
- In case of a *co-direction*, the two co-supervisors assess the PTD.

Please refer to the Graduate Institute’s Academic Regulations & Implementation Guidelines for the specific rules and regulations. Be aware that failure to hold deadlines is disqualifying.

Approved by the Academic Committee on 3 November 2015

² The exact time and place is communicated by the PhD secretariat.