Assessment of the quality of doctoral dissertations and instructions for grading

All doctoral dissertations should meet the following scholarly criteria: Doctoral dissertations must 1) contain new scientific knowledge, 2) demonstrate critical thinking, 3) demonstrate profound knowledge of the field, 4) demonstrate mastery of appropriate methods and the ability to apply them in practice, 5) be academically convincing, 6) contain well-grounded research results, and 7) demonstrate academic integrity and follow the norms of ethical research. The language of the research must be appropriate for the purpose. Doctoral dissertations are expected to be of higher quality than Licentiate theses in every respect.

The quality of doctoral dissertations is assessed according to the following criteria in particular:

- **The appropriateness of the research task and the professional relevance of the research problem:** Particular attention will focus on the innovativeness and scientific relevance of the research.
- **Scholarliness and the mastery of required research methods:** Attention will be paid to the type of abilities and qualifications the completion of the research task has required. Scholarliness refers to both sufficient expertise in the research field and wider eruditeness in one’s discipline and field.
- **Practical implementation of the research:** Under assessment are, for instance, the functionality of the structure of the work, the scope of the topic, and the level of writing of the work, including style.
- **The results of the research and their novelty, reliability and significance:** Characteristic of the science of law is that research results and the research process are often inseparable, because the research deals with interpretation and its justifiability. This further raises the significance of overall assessment.
- **The doctoral candidate’s ability to defend his or her research in the public examination:** The presentation process of a doctoral dissertation or a Licentiate thesis requires that the author defend his or her research in a public examination in an appropriate manner.

Doctoral dissertations are graded on a scale of **Pass with Distinction, Pass or Fail**. The dissertation is passed if it meets the minimum requirements assessed according to each criterion mentioned above and complies with current research ethics. Doctoral dissertations typically receive the grade **Pass**. If a doctoral dissertation is highly distinguished and ambitious in the light of essential assessment criteria, the dissertation may receive the grade **Pass with Distinction**. The grade **Pass with Distinction** may be awarded to no more than roughly 10% of all doctoral dissertations. However, each doctoral dissertation must be examined independently based on the grading criteria determined by the Faculty. Decisions on the grading of doctoral dissertations are based on the statements of the opponent and the grading committee.

The opponent must submit a reasoned written statement on the dissertation to the Faculty Council within one month of the public examination.

To supplement the opponent’s statement, the grading committee must submit to the Faculty Council a reasoned written statement proposing that the dissertation be either passed or failed. Should the dissertation be passed, the statement must include a proposal for a grade. Only those members of the grading committee who are entitled to vote participate in writing the grade proposal. The grading committee’s statement should explicitly cover all of the Faculty’s grading criteria. The grading committee need not be unanimous in its proposal. If the committee disagrees, each member who can vote must separately justify his or her views in writing. If the grading committee proposes the grade **Pass with Distinction**, it must justify its proposal in the light of the Faculty’s criteria for grading dissertations.

The Faculty Council shall decide on the approval or failing of a dissertation and on the grade awarded to dissertation that is approved.