

The rules for Ph.D. thesis defence
at the
Department of Botany, Faculty of Science, Charles University

Thesis requirements

The Ph.D. thesis is expected to demonstrate the competence of a Ph.D. student for scientific work. It must contain original results that have been published by the author or accepted for publication at least in part. The thesis is generally presented in the form of a collection of three papers (at least one published and at least one first authored) supplemented with a general introduction and conclusions. The introductory chapter should demonstrate critical thinking and deeper insight by the candidate into the background of material relevant to the thesis. If the work resulted from team collaboration, a declaration must be included by the supervisor or team leader specifying the contributions of the candidate. The contribution of the candidate should be substantial, i.e., he/she should be significantly involved in at least two of the following activities: i) study design, ii) data collection, iii) data analysis and interpretation, and iv) writing up.

The written review

It is recommended that the written review consists of (1) a short overall assessment of the thesis (scientific merit, originality, experimental design, choice and mastering of the methods, interpretation of results, quality of documentation), (2) specific critical comments, (3) more general questions to the defendant dealing with the subject, methods or interpretations that would allow the candidate to show in the reply how he/she is mastering the discipline. Please, include no more than three questions in the written summary, but prepare additional questions not known to the student before the defence. This will ensure a proper assessment of how well the student is familiar with the subject matter. The report should also contain a clear statement of whether the reviewer considers the thesis suitable or not for the award of a Ph.D. The review should be sent by e-mail at least 7 working days before the defence following the specifications sent from the study department.

The defence protocol

- The committee chair opens the defence and briefly introduces the candidate, reviewers, and the committee members.
- The supervisor briefly introduces the context of the thesis and may mention the personality of the candidate and the specifics of his/her research (max 10 minutes).
- The candidate presents main results of his/her thesis (~25 minutes).
- The reviewers present the main points of their reviews, give their critical comments, and ask specific questions regarding the thesis subject and methodology.
- The candidate replies to the criticism and questions of the reviewers.
- The committee chair then opens a general discussion. Here it is welcomed that reviewers develop their questions and ask new ones.
- After the discussion is over, there is a closed session of the committee and the reviewers. During this session, the reviewers and committee members exchange their opinions on the thesis and the student's performance. Finally, the committee members decide on the defence outcome (passed / not passed) by ballot. The reviewers do not vote unless they are also members of the committee. The committee will also decide whether to recommend to the Dean of the Faculty the award of a cum laude for outstanding work. A summary of the evaluation is presented to the candidate and the audience when the result is announced.
- The result is publicly announced to the candidate and the auditorium by the committee chair.