

## Vademecum for Doctoral Colloquium

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*Note:* The “doctoral colloquium”, widely recognized as an enriching and fruitful endeavor, is unique to the Universities of Lausanne and Neuchâtel. Accordingly, the specificity of this practice necessitates explanation to external experts/examiners who may not be familiar with the procedure.

*Objectives:* The goal of this doctoral colloquium is to improve the quality of the doctoral dissertation and to offer the candidate a constructive and detailed criticism to allow them to present a fully developed reflection at their defense. The colloquium offers a space for in-depth scientific discussion, while the public defense is also open to laypeople (family, friends, other members of the public).

### Principles

1. It is the responsibility of the doctoral supervisor, with input from the doctoral candidate, to organize the colloquium: to agree on a date, to assemble the jury members, to organize their travel and lodging, and to inform the Dean’s Office of the date reserved. With regards to the number of foreign experts/examiners, please see Point 3, below.
2. The doctoral colloquium will be a closed event (meaning it will be exclusively attended by the doctoral candidate, their supervisor and the subject matter experts/examiners).

It is essential that all members of the jury be present. A report drafted by an absent member does not replace the discussion and exchange of ideas that constitute the specificity of the colloquium. A report written in absentia should thus be reserved only for exceptional cases such as illness and other emergencies. It is possible to organize a video-conference discussion, especially for those jury members who must travel a long distance.

3. The jury includes a minimum of two and a maximum of four experts/examiners. To honor both Point 2 and the financial health of the Faculty, it is strongly recommended not to invite a large number of foreign experts/examiners. This recommendation applies particularly to those cases where one would like to call upon the expertise of colleagues from across the Atlantic, or other distant regions. The Dean’s Office can grant dispensations from this rule on a case-by-case basis.
4. The doctoral supervisor will explain the colloquium proceedings to the doctoral candidate before it takes place. They will warn the candidate to be prepared for the eventuality that the experts/examiners may ask for extensive revisions. They must also advise the candidate that they may be confronted with contradictory requests and that, in this case, the supervisor will intervene to mediate and clarify these instructions. Finally, the supervisor will remind the candidate that they have the right to react to the experts’/examiners’ notes in two ways: either they can integrate them in the next version, or they can refuse them, though the candidate must present a systematic argument in favor of this refusal.



5. Before the colloquium, the doctoral supervisor will present the core principle of this undertaking to the jury members: namely, that they must share ALL their thoughts with the candidate without withholding arguments or criticisms until the candidate's defense. The experts/examiners may fear, then, that they will have nothing more to share during the defense; the supervisor will explain to them that their participation in the defense is expected to be short (20 to 30 minutes maximum), including a general commentary on the dissertation and several questions permitting the candidate to demonstrate their ability to extemporize. They will remind the experts/examiners that, at the defense, the jury should emphasize the work the candidate has accomplished between the colloquium and the defense, and discuss potential new and/or corrective points that the candidate has added to the manuscript between the colloquium and the defense. They may also summarize the experts'/examiners' two major responsibilities: a) presenting criticisms, comments, queries, and advice during the colloquium, and b) presenting general commentary followed by an evaluation of the changes at the public defense.
6. During the colloquium the discussions center on general elements of the dissertation (for example structure, methodological principles, and/or bibliography), as well as on more detailed and in-depth aspects.
7. The length of the colloquium is not formally dictated. On average, the colloquium lasts between 3 and 4 hours (with a pause in the middle, as needed).
8. It is not necessary (and, in fact, is not recommended) for the candidate to make an introductory presentation. The members of the jury have read the dissertation and are there to share their feedback with the candidate. A presentation is an exercise meant to inform laypeople during the public defense.
9. The jury members may speak one at a time, with the possibility that individual members may address a point raised earlier by another, if they so wish. This dynamic should be managed according to the jury members' preferences and flexibly adapted to each individual case.
10. The role of the doctoral supervisor is to preside over the discussion and to highlight where the external experts'/examiners' opinions converge or diverge vis-à-vis how to improve the dissertation. They mediate between the jury members and the candidate, seek clarification as needed, and ensure that the essential points of the argument (or each chapter of the dissertation, for example) have been taken into account. In the case of a disagreement between experts/examiners, or even between the candidate and an expert/examiner, the supervisor should attempt to advance the discussion by proposing strategies to resolve the conflict.
11. The doctoral colloquium concludes with a rapid deliberation — with or without the candidate, as needed — that should decide whether the candidate might be admitted to the defense. A positive outcome is communicated immediately to the candidate by their doctoral supervisor, who should also clearly delineate the necessary modifications and suggested revisions. The colloquium ends with a final roundtable during which each member of the jury summarizes a general appraisal of the work accomplished, as well as the specific requests for modification that have been previously discussed. At this stage, it is important to limit discussion strictly to the list of essential points that must be revisited. If the work is not yet ready for a defense, the candidate must be informed and a list of necessary revisions clearly established. In this scenario a second colloquium must be scheduled.





12. Up to ten days after the colloquium, the doctoral supervisor may ask the jury members to supply a short summary of their evaluation of the work, as well as a list of points to revisit in the final version of the dissertation.

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