

Guide to PhD Examinations

General notes

During a PhD, you will take two exams. The first is the qualifying (mid-term) exam that takes place half-way through your PhD (after about 1.5 years if on the "5+3 degree", or after about 2 years if on the "4+4 degree"; see <https://phd.tech.au.dk/for-phd-students> for more details). The second is the "thesis defence", that takes place after you have submitted your thesis. For each of these exams, you will be assigned a "host", who will be in charge of the technical arrangements (e.g., welcoming the audience, introducing the student and examiners, keeping time, etc).

Here are some guides about what to expect. Please note that these are just guides; ultimately, the host decides the format and so the format will differ between PhD students. **Therefore, if concerned about a detail, the PhD student is encouraged to discuss with the host before the exam.** Further, it is highly recommended to attend a few qualifying exams and thesis defences to get familiar with the procedure and style of examination.

Qualifying Exam

Full details are provided at <https://phd.tech.au.dk/for-phd-students/progress-report-qualifying-exam>

Each PhD student will be assigned a senior member of the QGG PhD School (currently Doug Speed, Luc Janss or Ole Christensen); this person will act as their internal examiner and the host for the exam. The PhD student will also be assigned an external examiner (an expert in their research field, usually from a different university). These two examiners, plus the PhD student's supervisor, will be responsible for deciding if the PhD student passes their qualifying exam (and is therefore allowed to continue with their PhD).

The actual qualifying exam will take no more than two hours. First the PhD student will give a presentation lasting 30-45 minutes. While colleagues and members of the public can attend, they will not usually be invited to ask questions. After a short break, the two examiners will ask questions for about an hour. There is no fixed format for these questions; however, usually the examiners will alternate (e.g., each asking 1-2 questions for 5-10 minutes, then switching). There will then be a short break, while the examiners discuss the performance of the PhD student. After the break, the host will tell the PhD student whether they have passed.

Thesis Defence

Full details are provided at <https://phd.tech.au.dk/for-phd-students/thesis-defence>

Each PhD student will be assigned a senior member of the QGG PhD School (currently Doug Speed, Luc Janss or Ole Christensen); this person will act as their internal examiner and the host for the defence. The PhD student will also be assigned two external examiners (experts in their research field from a different university). These three examiners will be responsible for deciding if the PhD student passes their thesis defence (and is therefore awarded a PhD).

The defence will take no more than three hours. First the PhD student will give a presentation lasting about 45 minutes. Colleagues and members of the public can attend. After the presentation has finished, the host can invite the audience to ask one or two questions (if the host decides there is time). After a short break, the three examiners will ask questions (typically this lasts between one hour and 1.5 hours). There is no fixed format for these questions; however, usually either the examiners will alternate (e.g., each asking 1-2 questions for 5-10 minutes, then switching). There will then be a short break, while the examiners discuss the performance of the PhD student. After the break, the host will tell the PhD student whether they have passed.