

Guidelines for Defense of the PhD Thesis in Theological Studies (Catholic)

The examination board usually consists of three people: the Chair of the Program of Studies (or the Representative of the Chair), the doctoral supervisor, and one or two expert reviewers of the dissertation or lecturers of related subjects. The total length of the defense is 1 hour maximum. The defense consists of the following parts:

1. **Presentation of the findings of the dissertation by the doctoral candidate** (maximum 20 minutes! – then cutoff): Above all, the presentation should answer the proposed research questions and especially focus on each part of the dissertation which demonstrates progress from or improvement upon previous research.
2. **Defense of the thesis** (maximum 40 minutes): The starting point will be passages which were critiqued by the dissertation reviewers. The doctoral candidate has the chance to reply to these critiques. Following this, the members of the examination board are able to pose additional critical questions on the coherence and scope of specific findings of the dissertation. If possible, these questions will be posed in such a way that requires the candidate to present arguments for their results.

Special instructions for the members of the examination board:

Questions should be posed in a manner that is as clear and unambiguous as possible. They should allow the examinee enough room to extemporize. “Catechism questions,” which admit only a precise and specific response, are to be avoided. Also to be avoided, especially for examinees who are not native speakers of German, are “multi-line questions” which take the form of a short lecture by the examiner and which anticipate certain answers, or allow the examinee little room for their own responses.

Valid from the summer semester of 2018

Chair of the Doctoral Program of Studies