

Guidelines for Doctoral thesis evaluation reports at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Bern

This document provides basic information and defines minimum requirements for Doctoral thesis evaluation reports at the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Bern. The aim of the document is to support Doctoral thesis reviewers in drafting their reports according to the quality standards of the faculty. The standards are listed in form of a checklist at the end of this document.

It is important for Doctoral thesis reviewers to be aware of the fact that their evaluation is decisive for the final grade. Our faculty does not have a formal defense. The Doctoral school counts 1/4 of the final grade, the evaluation reports count 3/4. In the typical case of two evaluation reports, this means that your grade counts 3/8 of the final Doctoral grade. Due to their importance, Doctoral thesis evaluation reports must be drafted independently of each other and must not refer to each other.

Our faculty accepts both monographs and cumulated Doctoral theses. Cumulated theses consist of three or more papers. Authorship and publication requirements differ among the disciplines. The supervisor will inform you about the rules that apply to the specific case. The format of the thesis is not at stake in the evaluation report.

Doctoral students undergo doctoral training and their grades from Doctoral school count 1/4 of the final grade. Doctoral school grades evaluate the Doctoral student's scientific performance beyond the thesis. Your evaluation report therefore is meant to focus on the written performance in the thesis and not on the Doctoral student in general.

The evaluation report needs to be transparent and comprehensible. For reasons of transparency, present your perception of the main contents of the thesis separate from the assessment section. Evaluation regards form, style, but most importantly content. Doctoral theses must add new knowledge to the literature, be it empirical, theoretical, or methodological. It must be clear why you come to your assessment. Standards of excellence according to your field of expertise apply.

Our faculty uses a grading scale from 1 to 6 with the following meanings: 1='null', 2='very bad/fail', 3='not sufficient/fail', 4='pass', 4.5='sufficient', 5='good', 5.5='very good', and 6='excellent'. The grade 4 is the threshold for passing, the grade 5 is the threshold for well-executed theses. Half-grades are permitted but not common for grades below 4. The final grade is calculated on the basis of the different grades. A verbal grade is given based on the final grade only.

5.5 is the correct grade for very good theses. If you give a 6, the thesis must be excellent. Please provide a specific reason if you decide to give a grade below 4 or a 6.

Based on above explanations, the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Bern defines the following six standards for Doctoral thesis evaluation reports:

- 1. Evaluate the thesis independently. Do not refer to other evaluations of the same thesis.**
- 2. Evaluate the content but not the format of the thesis.**
- 3. Evaluate the content of the thesis but not the Doctoral student as a person.**
- 4. Provide a short account of the content of the thesis separate from the assessment.**
- 5. Give a numerical grade from 1 to 6, not verbal grades.**
- 6. Explain your grade. Provide specific reasons for a grade below 4 or if you give the best grade.**

Adopted on November 9, 2017 by the Faculty of Business, Economics and Social Sciences at the University of Bern.

signed Fritz Sager, Dean