Guidelines for seminar on a self-selected topic INF930

The lecture on individually selected subject is an optional element in the dissemination part of the PhD study plan. It is rewarded max. 1 credit under the course code INF930. The lecture is graded as passed/failed.

You and your supervisor must suggest a topic and a committee three weeks ahead of the seminar. The committee must be two persons, both can be from the department. The topic must be approved by the Board of doctoral education. Topic, venue and committee must be announced at the department web site two weeks in advance.

The criteria for lectures on self-selected subjects are the same as for a trial lecture on a given topic. It should demonstrate the candidate's ability to communicate research results, preferably to an audience with the background corresponding to master level in the field. The evaluation considers both the scientific content and the presentation quality.

The lecture must be open to all and announced 2 weeks in advance.

Please note that the time frame of 45 minutes for the lecture is an important parameter that will be measured and taken into account in the total evaluation. Too short or too long time will be a reason for failing the lecture.

1. What is a suitable topic

The topic is proposed by the PhD cand. and supervisor and approved by the department’s Board of Doctoral Education. The topic of the given subject must not be obtained from the key issues in the PhD thesis. The candidate is encouraged to choose a topic that s/he has gained insight to for other reasons, usually as a background for the thesis project. It is acceptable to include a limited number of examples from own research where this applies. However, the topic should be suitable and made available for a general audience of scientific and technical staff as well as master- and PhD cand. in the wider field of ICT-related research.

2. Expectations to the lecture

A lecture on individually selected subject at the Department of Informatics is expected to be at a high level both in terms of the scientific contents and the way the topic is presented. The purpose of the lecture is to give the PhD candidates an opportunity to document their ability to disseminate research-based knowledge. The lecture should normally be structured so that it can be followed by an audience with previous knowledge one could expect to find among master's students in the field of study (informatics). Both academic content and the ability to disseminate are emphasized in the assessment of the lecture.

3. Evaluation criteria

The lecture is evaluated both on contents and presentation, with possible conclusions Passed or Failed. When evaluating the quality of the lecture, the committee is asked to (as a minimum) pay attention to the following aspects:

- The presentation should be faithful to the given topic. It should include sufficient background. The presentation should reflect the present status of knowledge on the topic. The amount of material should be suitable for the scheduled duration.
- The presentation should be logically structured and with suitable organization of the information. It should contain a conclusion or summary that ties back to the aims of the lecture. Sources should be properly cited.
- The candidate should place the given topic in a larger context, linking it to contemporary issues where natural. The candidate should demonstrate overview of the subject.
- Visual aids should be legible and the figures clear and useful. The candidate should avoid too much jargon and excessive use of abbreviations. The pace should be suitable. The candidate should finish on time.
- The time frame for the lecture is 45 minutes. The time will be measured and is taken into account in the total evaluation. Accepted time flexibility is +/- 5 minutes. Too short or too long presentations will be a reason for failing the lecture.
- The overall quality of the lecture should be at a level that is acceptable for a newly educated researcher from the Department of Informatics, the highest ranked informatics department in Norway.
- The lecture should reflect an estimated time spent on preparation of 25-30 hours

4. Procedures at the department

The topic is proposed by the PhD cand. and supervisor and approved by the department's Board of Doctoral Education. To comply with the requirement of announcing the lecture 2 weeks in advance, the candidate must submit the proposed topic to the Board at least 3 weeks before the lecture is to be held.

The lecture will be evaluated by a committee of 2 members appointed by the department. At the Department of Informatics, an eligible committee member is a person with a doctoral degree, employed at the Department of Informatics. Researchers employed outside the Department of Informatics can be on the evaluation committee for a given candidate following special approval, and provided that the person has a doctoral degree AND that the second member of the committee is an eligible member from the Department of Informatics. A PhD candidate cannot be evaluated by his/her direct supervisor(s). A fair representation of the department's research groups as well as gender balance among the committee members should be taken into account. The members should normally belong to a different research group than the candidate's own.

At the beginning of the lecture, the candidate welcomes the audience to the lecture and points out the role it holds as part of the formal training for the PhD degree.

After the lecture, has finished, the committee withdraws. The committee should aim to reach a unanimous conclusion, and only thereafter inform the candidate about the outcome. Giving the candidate the benefit of doubt, a conclusion of Fail requires a unanimous committee.

Individual feedback sessions between the candidate and evaluation committee members after the conclusion of the evaluation are a good way to give constructive feedback and help the candidate improve her/his future presentation skills. Such feedback sessions, though, are optional and take place on a voluntary basis.

The evaluation committee needs to complete and sign the grading sheet they have received from the department's PhD coordinator. The sheet should be returned to the PhD coordinator without undue delay.

5. What happens in the case of a failed lecture

The lecture is graded as passed/failed. If a candidate receives an evaluation of Failed in her/his first attempt, s/he may choose to give a new lecture. The new lecture must be given on a new topic.