

Thesis defense policies & procedures at the University of Lausanne

This document provides the necessary steps to complete a doctoral thesis in the Lemanic Neuroscience Doctoral School (LNDS) for students enrolled at the University of Lausanne. In brief, a doctoral candidate must write his/her thesis, defend it at the “private defense” session in front of a selected jury, and then present it in a format more accessible for non-scientists in front of a public audience. At this point, the jury will give the final evaluation considering these four points:

- 1) The research work (skills and autonomy of the PhD candidate; originality of the PhD project)
- 2) The format and writing style of the thesis
- 3) The private defense (aka: soutenance privée, colloque de these or oral exam)
- 4) The public defense (aka: soutenance publique)

1. Is the student ready to defend?

Students who have completed all **coursework (18 ECTS)** and successfully passed their **mid-term evaluation** can begin to write their doctoral thesis comprising original research that is of publication quality. The thesis defense usually occurs in the **3rd, 4th or 5th year** of enrollment in the program. It is the responsibility of the PhD student together with the thesis director to determine when the student has completed enough work of publication quality to complete the end-of-thesis process.

Please note that **when you are enrolled at the SSP**, this end-of-thesis procedure needs to be initiated sufficiently early (i.e. 3 months before the planned “colloque de these”; cf. point 3.2 below).

2. Thesis format

Consult the Thesis Formatting Section (below) to properly organize and format the thesis document.

3. Pick your jury

3.1. For students enrolled at the FBM

A thesis jury needs to have 4 members and has to include:

- The thesis director (and co-directors, if applicable)
- Two experts, at least one from outside the University of Lausanne. One of the experts must be a professor. None of the experts can have collaborated in the thesis project or published with you.
- A jury president, who is a professor in one of the partner institutions and not related with the thesis project. The PhD student or the thesis director can suggest a president (to be approved by the school) or let the LNDS propose one.

Email all jury members to coordinate a date for the private thesis defense. Once the date is fixed, reserve a room on campus to hold the private defense. The composition of the jury, as well as the date

and location of the exam have to be announced to the LNDS School Coordinator (ulrike.toepel@unil.ch) and to the FBM Doctoral School Thesis Office (phdthesis@unil.ch) at least **5 weeks prior to the private thesis defense**.

3.2. For students enrolled at the SSP

No jury president is required.

A thesis jury consists of at least 3 members and has to include:

- The thesis director
- One expert from within the SSP faculty, either a professor or an MER.
- One non-UNIL expert, either a professor or an MER.

(If both experts chosen do not possess a professoral title, the jury will be completed by a professor of the SSP faculty.)

The composition of the jury needs to be announced to the “Secretariat des postgrades” (Géopolis 2612, UNIL-Dorigny, 1015 Lausanne) **at least 3 months before the planned date of your private defense (colloque de thèse)** since the jury composition will need to be approved by the faculty council. Please also see the « [Procédure à l’attention des doctorants](#) » of the SSP for additional information. According to the SSP procedures, the student arranges the transmission of the thesis manuscript directly with the jury members. Please note that it is obligatory to hold the « colloque de thèse » on the UNIL campus. One of the jury members should be designated as rapporteur for the Lemanic Neuroscience Doctoral School (i.e. informing the LNDS coordinator on the jury composition, defense dates and outcomes).

4. Before the private defense

Students enrolled at the FBM need to send the following documents to FBM Doctoral School Thesis Office (phdthesis@unil.ch), Amphipole 324, Unil-Sorge, 1015 Lausanne) **at least 5 weeks before the private defense**:

- A copy of the thesis
- A letter signed by the thesis director indicating the name, address, e-mail and fax of each jury member, and also the location and date chosen for the private defense.
- An updated CV of the PhD student.
- A list of publications, including articles and abstracts related to the thesis project.
- Two one-page summaries of the thesis, one in English and one in French. Each summary must be written on a separate page and include the title of the thesis, the name of the PhD student and the name of the host department of the thesis project.
- A one-page summary of the thesis written for the general public, in French (please do not forget to translate the title of the thesis into French). Your faculty could use this summary, including any pictures, to inform the media.

The LN coordinator will add to this dossier an attestation with the credits obtained during the PhD. At the same time, send a copy of the thesis to all jury members. Unless they specifically request the electronic version of the thesis, each jury member should receive a hard copy (the printed document). The Doctoral School will send an e-mail to the jury, with copy to the PhD candidate, asking them to send their report to the Doctoral School at least one week before the private defense. On this report, they will evaluate the format and contents of the thesis and indicate whether they consider the thesis eligible for attributing a PhD degree. After receiving these reports, the Doctoral School will send them to the president of the jury.

After receiving the thesis, the Doctoral School will send the **exam's registration bill** (500 CHF) to the student's private address. This bill must be paid **30 days before the public exam**.

Students enrolled at the SSP arrange the transmission of the thesis manuscript directly with the jury members.

5. Private Defense

Here, the candidate's general knowledge in Neurosciences will be evaluated, as well as the specific knowledge in the field of the thesis.

Details for students enrolled at the FBM

The defense (1-2 hours) will be conducted in the following order:

- 20-40 minutes of oral presentation by the PhD student
- 2 rounds of questions from the experts
- Questions from the president
- Deliberation by the jury

During the deliberation, the jury assigns 3 grades (1 to 6, average is 4, half points accepted) evaluating three aspects of the thesis:

- The research work (skills and autonomy of the PhD candidate; originality of the PhD project)
- The format and writing style of the thesis
- The private examination, including presentation skills and responses to questions posed by the jury members

The PhD candidate needs to obtain **a minimum grade of 4 on each of these aspects** to continue to his/her public defense. Given that the student has successfully passed the private defense, the jury (or at least the jury president and the thesis director) and the student fixes a date for the public thesis defense. The public defense should take place **minimum 3 weeks after the private exam**. Once the date is agreed upon, the student needs to reserve an auditorium to hold the public defense and announce the location, date and time to the FBM Doctoral School Thesis Office (phdthesis@unil.ch).

If the jury requires corrections to the thesis by the student, the document filled out during the private defense (the “procès verbal”) should specify the person who will be responsible for checking the corrections. This jury member has to receive the corrections, and announce to Mme. Donadeo that he/she agree with the new version of the thesis, **at least one week before the public defense.**

The **printed final version of the thesis** has to be handed to the president of the jury **at or before the public defense.** Still during the private defense, the “procès verbal” document will be filled out specifying whether the public defense will be held in English or in French.

Details for students enrolled at the SSP

Please refer to the « [Procédure à l’attention des doctorants](#) » for detailed information. Note that after the « colloque de thèse », an **exam registration bill** (500 CHF) needs to be paid. Details are to be obtained from the “Secretariat des postgrades” (Géopolis 2612, UNIL-Dorigny, 1015 Lausanne). After the « colloque de thèse », potential modifications asked for by the jury need to be implemented in the thesis document. Two versions of the corrected thesis need to be sent to the thesis director who will then communicate his decision on thesis eligibility to the decanat. In succession, the student is provided the “imprimatur” page (signature page) that needs to be included into the final and printed version of the thesis. The final printed version of the thesis needs to be sent to the “Secretariat des postgrades” at least 3 weeks before the public defense (soutenance).

The date for the **public defense (soutenance) can be fixed minimally 2 months after the « colloque de thèse »**. Three dates need to be proposed to the faculty as this final (public) thesis defense will be presided by the dean or the vice-dean of the faculty.

6. Public Defense

As indicated beforehand, the public defense **for students enrolled at the FBM** takes place at least **3 weeks after the private defense.** At the end of the public defense, the members of the jury decide whether the thesis is judged as acceptable (“réussi”) or not (“pas réussi”). Given the result is satisfactory, the PhD candidate receives the “imprimatur” page (signature page) from the jury president, a page that needs to be included in all final copies of the thesis.

7. After the public defense

A. Bound copies of the thesis document

After the public defense, **PhD candidates enrolled at the FBM** have got **maximum six months** to prepare official bound copies (see Thesis Formatting Section below) of the thesis document and distribute them as follows:

- 1 copy for the Lemanic Doctoral School, to be sent to the LN coordinator.
- 1 copy for the department where the research was done.
- 2 copies for the thesis director.
- 1 copy for each member of the jury. To avoid wasting paper, time and money, we recommend that the jury members be contacted to make sure they really want a final hard copy of the thesis.
- 3 bound copies for the BCU (Bibliothèque Cantonal et Universitaire), with a summary of the thesis in English, if the thesis was written in French, and the “imprimatur”. These 3 copies for the BCU need to be accompanied by a form available [here](#).

For students enrolled at the SSP, there is no such maximum defined, and also the recipients of your thesis (e.g. thesis director and jury members) can vary upon personal agreement, but you will not receive your official thesis diploma without making your thesis available at the BCU. Thus, provide the BCU with copies of your thesis by following the instructions just above.

Some students might like to bring the thesis’ final version personally to the LN Doctoral School when depositing it at the BCU, please feel free to do so, the two buildings are close to each other at the UNIL lake campus.

Please note that **students from all faculties have to remain enrolled at the University of Lausanne** until the thesis has been deposited to the BCU and to the Doctoral School.

B. On-line publication of the thesis

The thesis can be published on-line at the University of Lausanne, through the [SERVAL website](#).

C. Order your diploma

For students enrolled at the FBM, order your PhD degree electronically by filling in the [on-line order form available on “MyUNIL”](#). If an official attestation indicating that a PhD has been awarded is needed by the student, the Doctoral School can issue a legal certificate (upon student’s request).

For students enrolled at the SSP, the thesis diploma can be ordered via the “Secretariat des postgrades” (Géopolis 2612, UNIL-Dorigny, 1015 Lausanne).

How to format your thesis

A. General formatting regulations for the final thesis version

Some general advice from the "[Prescriptions pour l'impression et le dépôt des thèses de doctorat de l'Université de Lausanne](#)":

- A4 format, 29.7 x 21 cm
- Double-sided printing
- Paper 80 gr/m²
- 40 lines/page maximum
- 15 mm external margin minimum
- Clean presentation of text, pictures and tables, without corrections
- Front cover in cardstock (130 - 180 gr/m²)
- Official title page, which is available [here](#) (will be the first page of the document as well as the front cover of the thesis) for the FBM students, please insert the SSP logo when enrolled there
- The "imprimatur" page immediately follows the title page (attributed by the thesis jury)
- Please note that the binding of the document cannot be done with rings or plastic

B. How to organize a thesis with published articles

To write your thesis with articles you need to have at least two articles published, accepted for publication or at least accepted for review, in peer-reviewed journals. Please contact the LNDS coordinator in case of questions. Only if your contribution is significant, the article will be considered as part of your thesis. The advantage of a thesis written with articles is that the chapters of the results section can be replaced by articles.

A thesis with articles should be structured as follows:

- Official title page, to download from the [LN website](#) (please change logos when enrolled at SSP)
- Imprimatur page (attributed by the thesis jury)
- Acknowledgements
- Abstract (in English & French)
- Introduction (10-20 pages)
- Brief summary of the results, indicating precisely your contribution to each article
- Discussion (10-20 pages)
- References
- Articles

C. How to organize a thesis without published articles

The advantage here (for some) might be that you can write the thesis in French and without having articles published or accepted.

This type of thesis should be structured as follows:

- Official title page, to download from the [LN website](#) (please change logos when enrolled at SSP)
- Imprimatur page (attributed by the thesis jury)
- Acknowledgements
- Abstract (in English & French)
- List of Abbreviations
- Table of Contents
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- Introduction (10-20 pages)
- Materials and Methods
- Results
- Discussion (10-20 pages)
- References

Please **keep in mind the following points** when writing a thesis with or without articles:

- Please download the **thesis official title page** from the [school's website](#).
- The Imprimatur page has to immediately follow the title page in the final thesis version. This can be done by scanning the original Imprimatur page and inserting it into the thesis document (please do not use a jpg-photo, the quality is not sufficient).
- A good introduction should show that you have acquired a broad knowledge of the previous and ongoing research in your field, do not forget appropriate referencing.
- A good discussion should express critical thinking concerning what the student has learned:
 - Discussing your results in light of other's results, making an overall analysis of the publications reviewed.
 - Analyzing the quality and limitations of the results.
 - Formulating conclusions.
 - Making the point about future perspectives.

If you have questions regarding the format of your thesis or the procedure do not hesitate to contact the [LN coordinator](#).