Tips for writing a summary

More information about the press release

Who will receive the press release?

Prior to the public defence of the dissertation, the Communication unit will send out a press release with information on the dissertation and the doctoral candidate. The press release is distributed, in both Swedish and Finnish, to a total of approx. 250 recipients, including national, regional and local media across the country. Among the recipients are, for example, Finnish News Agency (STT-FNB), the Finnish and Swedish YLE channels, MTV3, Helsingin Sanomat, Kauppalehti, Aamulehti, Hufvudstadsbladet (Hbl), Vasabladet (Vbl), Åbo Underrättelser (ÅU), etc. In addition, the recipient list includes special magazines, such as Tiede and Läraren, as well as freelance journalists interested in science and research.

What happens to the press release?

Normally, the press release is sent out one week before the public defence of the dissertation. The doctoral candidate shall provide the Communication unit with relevant information (complete the doctoral candidate form and send a photo to meddelanden@abo.fi) four weeks before the date of the public defence. At the Communication office, the information given on the form will be used to produce the press release, and for this purpose, the summary plays a key role.

In the best case, the press release will encourage journalists to contact the doctoral candidate for an interview. Often such interviews are made in advance, so it’s a good idea to be available (by phone) during the week prior to the public defence of the dissertation. On the doctoral candidate form, you should therefore give your mobile phone number rather than a landline phone number. Please keep your phone switched on, and answer any calls from unknown numbers as well.

It is up to the media themselves to decide what information they publish and who they wish to interview. Whether or not the dissertation passes the news threshold depends on several factors, including the dissertation topic and its general interest, current news volume, the doctoral candidate’s hometown, and so on.

How should I write?

When writing the summary, remember that the press release is intended for the average reader. Instead of addressing colleagues, you are writing to a person who is not familiar with the topic of your research.

– If possible, start with the most important result/finding/conclusion of your thesis. Write about the background and discuss the results later in the text.

– Explain why your research and findings are important. How will the public at large benefit from your research results? How do the results contribute to further research and where will it lead?
– Write in plain language and avoid using too many special terms. Explain those terms that “us others” may have difficulty understanding.

– Write as if you were explaining the contents of your thesis to a friend who is not a researcher colleague. Popularize.

– Focus on the essential. You need not present all the results. Be concise. The text should fit in a single A4 sheet.

– Write short sentences, go right to the business. Don’t use complicated language unnecessarily. Divide the text into paragraphs for easier reading.

– The text must not contain any source references (footnotes) or graphs.

– Do not use the first person (“I” or “we”) but keep to the general level. For example, write “the findings in the thesis...” rather than “my research findings...”.

Why should I write a good summary?

Why? Because the subject of your study is interesting and because your effort for the dissertation deserves public attention.

Moreover, it is the university’s and researcher’s duty – apart from their primary tasks, namely research and education – to disseminate their knowledge to society, to interact with society and to promote the impact of research results in society.

Why should I include a summary in Finnish?

The chances to be observed by the Finnish media are better if the summary is published also in Finnish. If you do not include a Finnish summary in the doctoral candidate form, the press release in Finnish will only contain the title of your thesis, the date and place for the public defence of the dissertation, and your name, birth place and previous education.

If the Finnish media becomes interested in your dissertation, it does NOT mean that you are required to give an interview in fluent Finnish.

The Communication office does not, unfortunately, have sufficient resources to provide translation assistance. However, we will proofread the texts and correct any language errors – both in Swedish and Finnish – before sending out the press release. Please, do not use google translate.

Any questions?

Please contact the Communication unit via e-mail to information@abo.fi.