Guidelines for writing a public summary of your PhD-thesis

After years of hard work you have finished your PhD thesis. Congratulations! We want to help you reach a broad audience with your work that goes beyond the academics in your specific field of research. A public summary, written in laymen’s vocabulary, will make it more accessible not only to the audience at large, but also to academics in other fields, to journalists and to industry or entrepreneurs. And of course also to family and relatives.

Guidelines for public summary text

Please aim for a text of max. 600 words. This is roughly 1 page. You can write your summary either in Dutch or in English. Examples of public summaries can be found on the website. Please use the Word template/dummy to write your summary.

Please address the following questions:

- What are your most important findings/results?
- What is the main problem (area) or issue you are helping solve, or have solved? This information is usually in paragraph 1.1 of the PhD-thesis.
- What are the eventual applications? What work needs to be done before your findings can be applied?
- How did you reach your findings?
- Please include extraordinary facts and explanations that you consider crucial.
- The headline should preferably make clear what the main problem is that you have addressed and what you have found or improved. The headline is not the title of your dissertation.
- Avoid the passive voice. For example “it was shown that” is not clear about who showed it and if it is part of your work. The first person singular perspective (“I”) is the most precise perspective as you are writing about your own work; first-person plural (“we”) is a good second best.

Please also send in a landscape oriented, appealing picture of yourself or of something essential of your research.

Process

- Write your public summary at least six weeks prior to your defense date.
- Once you have written your summary, please send it to the science information officers of TU/e, via nieuws@tue.nl, including the picture.
- They will do basic editing on the text, in consultation with you. As it is your work, you decide when the summary is ready for publication.
- After your approval the summary is put in Pure, and then automatically appears in the online overview/calendar of PhD-defenses.
- The science information officers use the summary to assess media potential, and possibly to approach the media. Outreach to media will always be in consultation with you.
- Also the summary serves as basis for posts on TU/e social media channels.
- The communication expertise center of TU/e (CEC) promotes the overview/calendar of PhD-defenses and the associated summaries in general, in order to generate publicity.
- For doctoral candidates of the department of Mechanical Engineering: the public summary replaces the Societal Summary, which previously was an obliged part of the dissertation.
Questions?
Please contact Science Information Officers Ivo Jongsma (i.l.a.jongsma@tue.nl) or Barry van der Meer (b.v.d.meer@tue.nl) if you have any questions or feedback.