

Information sheet: Evaluation of doctoral theses

The examiner and the coexaminers create written evaluations of the doctoral thesis (ETH Zurich Ordinance on the Doctorate of 23. November 2021 (Version: 1. January 2022), Art. 41).

The evaluation contains the author contact details (title, name, university/research institution/firm, postal address, telephone number, email address), the date the document was created and the signature of the author.

Generally, an evaluation is one to two pages long and structured as follows:

1. Summary of the doctoral thesis

The topic of the doctoral thesis should be summarised briefly.

2. Evaluation of the doctoral thesis's quality and innovative contribution

To judge the quality and the innovative contribution of a doctoral thesis, the following points are to be considered:

Form and structure

- Is the work well structured? Is the structure logical?
- How good is the level of language?
- Are texts, graphics and tables well formulated?

Introduction and goals

- Is the introduction to the particular issues adequately long and complex?
- Is the research question clearly formulated?

Methods

- Are the methods clearly described and is their use justified?

Results

- Is the analysis of the data clearly described and is their interpretation conclusive?

Discussion and conclusions

- Does the work contain a discussion of the methods and results?
- Are the results compared with the literature and are clear conclusions drawn?
- Is there a justification of the conclusions based on the results?
- Are further experiments/perspectives indicated?

Literature

- Is the cited literature comprehensive, relevant and current?

Originality and complexity of the work

- How high is the scientific originality of the work?
- How complex are the methods used?
- What position does the work take within the sphere of this specialised field?

Cumulative doctoral theses

- Is it made clear in the introduction which over-arching research question connects the individual publications and how the publications contribute to answering the research question?
- Does the concluding discussion cover all of the manuscripts?
- Are all the individual results brought together?
- Are the methods discussed extensively?
- Is the research question that was formulated in the introduction answered in the manuscripts?

3. Recommendation on acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis

A clear recommendation for the acceptance or rejection of the doctoral thesis must be expressed. Any deficiencies should be declared with an indication as to whether the doctoral thesis will only be recommended for acceptance after the deficiencies are resolved.

4. Recommendation for the ETH Medal

The top eight percent of ETH doctoral students receive the ETH Medal for outstanding doctoral theses. If the thesis at hand exceeds all the necessary criteria for the acceptance, the recommendation for the medal must be explicitly be stated in the evaluation report.

The signed evaluation must be sent electronically per e-mail (pdf) to the D-BIOL Doctoral Administration (doctoraladmin@biol.ethz.ch) at the latest until 5 working days before the doctoral examination.