



Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich  
Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich

**Department of Computer Science**  
**Doctoral Administration**

ETH Zurich  
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## **Guidelines for Doctoral Examiners**

This document is intended to inform examiners about the general procedures for the examination of doctoral theses in the Department of Computer Science at ETH Zurich and their role in these procedures. In particular, it describes the format of the thesis reports that examiners are required to submit before the examination and details of the examination itself.

### **1. Examination Committee**

The examination committee consists of the supervisor, one or more co-examiners, and a full professor of the Department of Computer Science to chair the proceedings. The Department must approve co-examiners; for not ETH professors, a short CV must be submitted at the time of appointment. Note that it is typical to have 2-3 co-examiners.

### **2. Duties of Examiners**

All examiners have to approve the thesis before the examination. That means that the examiners must have read the thesis and given feedback on any required or recommended changes before the examination and have approved the thesis version submitted by the student. In addition, each examiner must write a report on the thesis, which must be submitted at least eight days before the examination. The thesis and all reports are made available to all professors within the department before the examination.

It is expected that examiners are present at the examination either physically or remotely via videoconferencing. Each examiner will be allocated time during the examination to ask questions, and they should therefore have a set of prepared questions ready. These questions may be about specific details of the thesis or general questions about the research area.



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### **3. Thesis Reports**

The thesis report should be 2-3 pages in length, and it should summarise the main contributions of the thesis and comment on the quality of the work in terms of the scientific content and also the presentation. Since it is normal practice that a thesis is only submitted once all examiners have approved it, the report concludes with a statement from the examiner recommending its acceptance as submitted for a doctoral degree. Note that minor revisions can be made to the thesis after the examination when the students have to prepare a bound final version for publication.

The department may propose an outstanding thesis for the award of an ETH medal. The reports of the examiners will be an important factor in deciding on recommendations. If an examiner considers a thesis to be outstanding in terms of both scientific contribution and presentation, they may therefore wish to add an additional statement recommending that it be considered for an award. Note that a maximum of 8% of doctoral theses can be awarded a medal.

The report should clearly show the title of the thesis and the name of the doctoral student in the heading. It must also contain title, first name, last name, and letterhead used in written correspondence of the examiner. In addition, the report should be dated and signed. If a report is submitted electronically, the examiner will be asked to sign a copy of the report at the examination.

### **4. Examination Procedure**

The date and time of the examination will be agreed upon in advance by all members of the examination committee and announced to all members of the department. Doctoral exams can be held with some or all of the members of the Examination Committee physically present or by videoconference.



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The examination consists of a presentation of 30 minutes of the thesis by the student followed by a discussion session during which examiners can ask questions of the student. The exam lasts at least 90 minutes.

Note that other members of the department and guests may attend the examination as observers. It is usual, for example, that the other members of the student's research group or institute attend.

The examination committee meets directly after the examination to agree on the outcome and whether the committee would support the recommendation of the thesis for an ETH Zurich medal. The examination outcome is a pass/fail based solely on the student's performance in the examination.

Prof. David Steurer  
Chair of the Doctoral Committee  
Department of Computer Science

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