

# Factsheet – Aptitude colloquium D-USYS

The aim of this fact sheet is to summarize the main points regarding the aptitude colloquium (AC) at D-USYS. It is based on the following regulations:

- [Ordinance on the Doctorate at ETH Zurich](#)
- [Rector's Implementation Provisions for the ETH Zurich Ordinance on the Doctorate](#)
- [Detailed stipulations regarding the doctorate D-USYS](#)

## What is the goal of the aptitude colloquium (AC)?

The goal of the AC is to assess if the doctoral student is qualified for definitive admission to the ETH doctorate.

## Who are the aptitude committee members?

The aptitude committee is composed of the following persons:

- a. The chairperson. This person can be any appointed professor (assistant, associate and full ranks) in D-USYS or any other ETH Zurich department
- b. The doctoral thesis supervisor
- c. The second advisor

In addition, at the request of the supervisor and after consultation with the doctoral student, the aptitude committee can be expanded to include further experts (e.g., project collaborators).

## What is the role of the aptitude committee?

Generally, the aim is to make sure that the student is on the right track with their research project and to give feedback on the project itself (e.g., discuss if certain tasks should be planned differently etc.). The committee evaluates the suitability of the candidate for conducting a research project independently and authoring a doctoral thesis. The doctoral plan and the presentation (during the AC) by the doctoral student (see below) form the basis for this evaluation. Furthermore, the committee gives its opinion on further points covered in the doctoral plan, i.e., teaching tasks and any other duties, such as monitoring of equipment or organizational tasks for the research group. The feedback from the aptitude committee should mainly benefit the doctoral student but also the supervisor and second advisor.

## What is the procedure of the AC? How does it work for different institutes?

The AC lasts a maximum of one hour and can proceed in physical presence, via video link or in hybrid form. The AC can be conducted publicly but the institutes can decide if an audience is allowed or not. If aptitude committee members and/or the doctoral student take part by video link, two-way communication – both video and audio – must be guaranteed during the entire AC.

In a 20-minute talk, the doctoral student presents the planned research objectives and tasks as laid out in the doctoral plan as well as the timeline. After this the committee asks questions which are answered by the doctoral student. Apart from research-related questions, the committee may also ask questions about teaching tasks and other duties. The committee discusses internally its evaluation and decides if the doctoral student has “passed” or “failed”. Definitive admission to the doctorate proceeds if the aptitude committee evaluates the examination as “passed”.

At D-USYS, institutes may have further detailed regulations for the AC procedure, please check the institutes' websites.

**What is the role of the chairperson?**

The chairperson is an independent person (not involved in the project of the doctoral student) whose main role is to make sure that the exam is conducted in a fair way and that time is kept. Depending on the specific expertise of the chairperson they can also be involved in asking project-related questions.

In case the AC is conducted via video or in hybrid mode: If two-way communication via video or audio is compromised, it is the duty of the chairperson to interrupt the AC and to organize a new date to resume it. The chairperson decides whether to restart the AC from the beginning, or whether it can be resumed from the point at which communication was interrupted.

Immediately after the AC, the chairperson informs the doctoral student of the decision, i.e., “passed” or “failed” and submits the result to the D-USYS doctoral committee using the form provided, together with any additional points discussed during the AC.

**What happens if the AC is failed?)**

If the result of the AC is not unanimous, the D-USYS doctoral committee will decide on the matter within one month after the AC; it may also consult the aptitude committee and the candidate to obtain further information.

An examination which concluded with a “failed” result may be repeated once, provided that the doctoral thesis supervisor agrees. The doctoral thesis supervisor may only refuse a repetition if the aptitude committee unanimously assessed the first attempt as “failed”. Any repetition must take place within three months after the first AC result was communicated.

**What are the relevant deadlines?**

The AC will take place **at the latest 12 months** after provisional admission of the doctoral student. The following deadlines must be met:

- At least **one month before** the aptitude colloquium, the doctoral student submits the following [form](#) to the [D-USYS Doctoral Administration](#) by e-mail.
- At least **15 working days before** the aptitude colloquium, the doctoral student submits the doctoral plan to the [D-USYS Doctoral Administration](#) by e-mail.

On substantiated request the Vice Rector for Doctoral Studies may extend the deadline for the AC or its repetition (in case the first AC was failed). The requests must be submitted by the doctoral student or the supervisor to the [D-USYS Doctoral Administration](#) by [form](#) for approval. The department forwards it to the Vice-Rector for Doctoral Studies to issue the decision.

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