

Guidelines for chairing doctoral examinations at D-USYS

The doctoral exam consists of:

- a presentation of the doctoral thesis (20 minutes).
- An oral exam of at least one hour on the subject(s) of the doctoral thesis.
- Questions from the audience will not be counted towards the minimum duration of the oral exam.
- If requested, the audience may be allowed to leave the room between the presentation and the oral exam. The Chairperson will inform the audience prior to the presentation in order to prevent people from leaving the room during the oral exam and disrupting the exam.

The doctoral exam is conducted by the examination committee

The examination committee consists of:

- A chairperson
- Supervisor of the doctoral thesis as examiner
- At least one independent co-examiner
- At least one external co-examiner (active professor or a person with proven expertise in the subject area of the doctoral thesis and is equivalent to a professor)

The external and the independent co-examiner may or may not be the same person.

Evaluation of the doctoral thesis and of the doctoral exam

The examiner and the co-examiners shall record their evaluation of the thesis in their reports. They shall state their affiliation and contact details in their reports. The reports shall be signed and dated. The reports must state whether the thesis is accepted or rejected and whether corrections are required ("accepted with revisions"). If the thesis is rejected, the doctoral examination must be postponed.

The reviews are confidential. The members of the examination committee have access to the reviews. Doctoral students may view reviews of their own doctoral thesis upon request after completion of the doctoral procedure.

The examination committee evaluates the examination as "passed" or "failed". If the examination is passed, the committee also advises on whether and which corrections are to be made in the revision of the doctoral thesis.

The committee also decides whether the work should be proposed for the ETH Medal. In this case, the excellence of the work must be mentioned in the reviews..

Immediately after the doctoral exam, the chairperson informs the doctoral student orally of the evaluation of the doctoral exam and the doctoral thesis, including any revision points. The chairperson forwards this information to the Doctoral Administration D-USYS (phd@usys.ethz.ch) using the form "Decision of the Examination Committee".

Practical tips

- Doctoral exams are normally held in public. If doctoral students wish to have a closed exam, they must submit a reasoned request to the D-USYS Doctoral Administration. The Chairperson will be informed of a closed exam.
- Doctoral exams can be conducted in three different ways:
 - Doctoral exams can be held physically in the presence of the doctoral candidate, the members of the examination committee and the chairperson.
 - Doctoral exams can be conducted as a hybrid event.
 - Doctoral exams can be conducted entirely via Zoom.
- During the exam, the chairperson's role is to oversee the orderly conduct and fairness of the exam, and to ensure that the examiner and co-examiners have time to ask their questions.

Legal basis:

ETH: [Ordinance on Doctoral Studies ETH Zurich](#) & [Rector's Implementation Provisions](#)
D-USYS: [Detailed stipulations regarding the doctorate D-USYS](#)

- Doctoral students must be informed that the doctoral title may not be used until the deposit copies and the electronic version have been delivered. A provisional confirmation of having passed the doctoral exam can be obtained from the Doctoral Administration D-USYS.

Potential problems

- The supervisor of the doctoral thesis does not appear → the exam must be postponed.
- The doctoral student does not appear → the exam must be postponed.
- A co-examiner does not appear:
 - If it is the independent person, the examination must be postponed.
 - If it is not the independent person, the exam may exceptionally take place if all parties agree.
- The chairperson does not appear → if a replacement can be found at short notice, the exam can take place.
- In any case, the Doctoral Administration D-USYS must be informed immediately.

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