

Evaluation of the doctoral thesis

Fact sheet for co-examiners at

Doctoral Exams

Co-examiner's reports & procedure of the doctoral examination

The assessment of the doctoral thesis considers not only the scientific quality, but also the linguistic quality. The supervisor and the co-examiners set out their assessments in written reports. These reports must state whether the thesis should be accepted or rejected and whether corrections are required ("accepted with revisions"). Co-examiners must include their affiliation and contact details in their reports. ETH Zurich does not provide a template for the report.

Co-examiner's reports

The letter should be addressed to the head of the D-USYS department, Prof. Dr. Nicolas Gruber (CHN E 31.2, Universitätstrasse 16, 8092 Zurich and must be dated and signed (electronic signatures are permitted). The reports are usually between 1 and 2 pages long.

The reports must contain the following elements:

- Author's title, name and contact details (address / affiliation / e-mail).
Letterheads commonly used in written correspondence usually meet these requirements.
- Title of the doctoral thesis and name of the doctoral candidate.
- Summary of the doctoral thesis.
- Evaluation of the thesis' quality and innovative contribution:
 - Form and structure
 - Introduction and goals
 - Methods
 - Results
 - Discussion and conclusions
 - Literature (cited literature comprehensive, relevant and current?)
 - Originality and complexity of the work
- Recommendation on acceptance (with or without revisions) or rejection of the doctoral thesis.

Deadline

The reports must be submitted by email to phd@usys.ethz.ch at least five working days before the exam.

ETH Medal

At ETH Zurich, neither a grade nor a predicate is awarded for doctoral theses. However, there is the possibility to propose a doctoral thesis for the ETH Medal. The outstanding of the thesis must already be mentioned in the reviews of the supervisor and the co-examiners. Only the top 8% of doctoral theses are eligible for this award. In order to qualify for the award, a thesis should score highly in several of the following categories:

- Scholarship and scientific excellence
- Innovation
- Interdisciplinary approach and practical relevance
- Language, style and presentation of the thesis

Additional information

The members of the examination committee are authorized to view all evaluation reports. You will receive all reports approx. 3 working days before the exam. Please note that when the doctoral procedure is completed, doctoral students can view the reports pertaining to their own doctoral theses upon request.

Doctoral Exam

D-USYS doctoral exams are usually open to the public. The examination includes a presentation (duration 20 minutes), followed by a defence, including questioning by the members of the examination committee. The doctoral examination lasts at least 1 hour and 20 minutes. Questions from the audience are allowed after the questioning by examiners is completed (questions from the audience do not count towards the minimum duration of the doctoral examination).

The examination committee evaluates the oral exam as "passed" or "failed". In the case of a passed oral exam, the examination committee will also advise whether and which corrections should be made in the revision of the doctoral thesis (e.g., more detailed description of results, addition of discussion points as well as spelling and grammatical errors).

The examination committee consists of:

- Chairperson
- Supervisor of the doctoral thesis as examiner
- At least one co-examiner
- At least one independent person as co-examiner
- As of 01.01.2024, at least one external person (active professor or a person who has proven expertise in the subject area of the doctoral thesis and is equivalent to a professor therein).

Payment for external co-examiners

In the directive it states that the payment for external co-examiners of theses, including attending the doctoral examination where applicable, should be CHF 400. This excludes co-examiners who are employed in the ETH Domain or at the University of Zurich. The payment is made by the professorship responsible for supervising the thesis.

Legal basis

Ordinance ETH: <https://rechtssammlung.sp.ethz.ch/Dokumente/340.31en.pdf>

Rector's Implementation Provisions: <https://rechtssammlung.sp.ethz.ch/Dokumente/340.311en.pdf>

Detailed stipulations D-USYS: <https://rechtssammlung.sp.ethz.ch/Dokumente/344.0700.10en.pdf>

Payment: <https://ethz.ch/content/dam/ethz/common/docs/weisungssammlung/files-de/entschaedigung-ik.pdf>

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