

Information sheet on preparation and procedure for the doctoral examination

This information sheet supplements the «Doctorates in the D-GESS» information sheet and is given to candidates when they register for the doctoral examination and to the assessors, together with the doctoral thesis that is to be assessed.

Assessment

Assessing the doctoral thesis: The assessors express their opinion on both the scientific and stylistic quality of the thesis. In the case of cumulative doctoral theses, they check in particular whether the candidate's independent scientific contribution is clearly identified and complies with the requirements in terms of scope (currently at least one paper of which the candidate is sole author and at least two more papers of which the candidate is the sole or first author).

The thesis can only be assessed as satisfactory/unsatisfactory; no honours are awarded at ETH Zurich. The assessors also determine whether any additional requirements have to be met for publication. If any additional requirements are imposed, then the deadline must be stated by which these have to be met and whether they need to be presented to the committee again or only to the supervisor for checking. If the deficiencies are substantial in scale and/or relate to key parts of the thesis, it is to be rejected as unsatisfactory. In this case, the doctoral examination has to be repeated. If there are doubts about the deficiencies in the thesis, the doctoral examination should be used to clear these up or to confirm them.

Cancellation or postponement of the doctoral examination: If the majority of the assessors conclude that the doctoral thesis cannot be recommended for acceptance, it is at the discretion of the supervisor, with the agreement of the doctoral student, to cancel the doctoral examination and postpone it to a later date.

Submission deadline: The assessments by the examiner and the co-examiners must have been submitted to the Study Administration Office at least one week before the doctoral examination. The Study Administration Office sends these assessments to all the assessors so that they can prepare for the doctoral examination, with the help of the observations of their colleagues.

Doctoral examination

The doctoral examination lasts for 1.5 hours and is made up of two parts: first the candidate presents his work and his main findings (30 minutes); then the members of the Examination Committee ask questions about the methods, theory and empirical analysis as well as about the results and further aspects of the research (60 minutes). During this question and answer session, priority is given to those members of the Examination Committee who have not supervised the thesis. Towards the end of this session, questions may also be taken from the audience.

Assessment of the doctoral examination

The doctoral examination is not given a particular mark but is simply passed or failed. A successful candidate must pass both the doctoral thesis and the oral examination.

If any additional requirements are set for the thesis, then an application can only be made to the Department Conference once these requirements have been met.

If the doctoral examination is failed, it can be retaken within six months. The failure must also be reported to the Department Conference.

Electronic recording devices

Recording devices of any kind are strictly forbidden during the doctoral examination (including mobile phones, which must be kept switched off during the examination). If a doctoral examination is recorded, in full or in part, it can be judged by the committee as having been failed.