Guidelines for Doctoral Examinations in the Department of Earth Sciences, ETH Zurich

(Rules decided at the Department Conference of March 3, 2015)

1. The doctoral thesis must be submitted to the supervisor and to the members of the examination committee at least 6 weeks (30 workdays) prior to the date of doctoral examination. The supervisor and the co-examiners submit their signed thesis reports to the chairperson and the study administration office at least 15 workdays prior to the doctoral examination. If the reports are not available on time, the examination must be rescheduled to respect the 15-day period. With the submission of their reports, the supervisor and the co-examiners confirm their agreement with the date set for the doctoral examination. The official invitation to the doctoral examination can be issued only upon receipt of written approval by the chairperson, at the latest 10 days prior to the examination date. If the supervisor and the members of the doctoral examination committee do not agree unanimously to accept the doctoral thesis, then the chairperson, upon consultation with the examination committee members and a hearing with the candidate, is empowered to cancel the doctoral examination. The supervisor and the co-examiners must submit their original and signed reports to the defence Chairperson (Vorsitzender) prior to the oral examination. These written assessments are confidential - the doctoral candidate does not have the right to read it. The Chairperson should consult with the pro-rector in case of any problem. The Chairperson should promptly after the defence send the signed, original reports to the Study Administration Office.

2. The oral presentation is public. The Chairperson may ask for limiting the audience to members with doctoral title only.

3. The oral examination must last at least one hour and consists of:
   - A presentation by the candidate, which lasts a maximum of 30 minutes (summary of the doctoral thesis results)
   - An oral examination, lasting at least 30 minutes, during which the examiners raise questions dealing with the dissertation subject and obtain answers from the candidate. The traditional order: supervisor, first co-examiner, second co-examiner etc. may be changed if agreed among members of the committee. The Chairperson may participate to the questioning.
   - After questioning by the members of the thesis committee, the Chairperson offers to other doctor-members of the department and subsequently other present scientists with a PhD-degree to raise critical questions on the dissertation topic. The Chairperson may exclude answers to these questions from being taken into consideration in the evaluation of the oral examination

4. At the end of this oral examination all lecturers of the department are invited to join the thesis committee to discuss the thesis defence. All other attendants must leave the room, along with the candidate.

5. The Committee and the other members of the Earth Sciences teacher’s conference share their assessment of both the dissertation and oral examination. Ultimately the Committee alone decides whether the candidate passed the oral examination and whether the work deserves an “Auszeichnung” (limited to the top 5% theses). The Chairperson is not entitled to vote, unless he has to provide the decisive vote in case of unresolved assessment. Deliberation is confidential and may not be discussed externally.

6. The doctoral candidate is called in the examination room where the Chairperson of the Examination Committee notifies the committee decision (passed or not).