

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

(Approved at the Department Conference of November 30, 2021)

1. The official invitation to the doctoral examination is issued at the latest 10 days prior to the examination date. At that point in time, these written assessments are confidential - the candidate does not have the right to read it
2. The oral presentation is public.
3. The chairperson can limit the audience to members with a doctoral title.
4. The oral examination last at least 90 minutes and consists of:
 - a. A presentation by the candidate, lasting 30 minutes at maximum (summary of the doctoral thesis results)
 - b. An oral examination of at least 60 minutes, during which the examiner and the co-examiners raise questions regarding the dissertation subject and obtain answers from the candidate. Traditionally, the external examiner ask questions first, but the order may be changed if agreed among members of the committee. The chairperson may participate in the questioning. All members of the examination committee are entitled to examine. (DV Art. 41 Abs. 3)
 - c. After questioning by the members of the thesis committee, the chairperson offers to ask questions on the dissertation topic to other members of the department with a doctoral-degree and subsequently other present scientists with a doctoral-degree. The chairperson may disallow question questions or exclude answers to these questions from being considered in the evaluation of the oral examination
5. At the end of the oral examination, all lecturers of the department are invited to join the examination committee for deliberation of the thesis defence. All other attendants must leave the room, including the candidate.
6. The examination committee and participating lecturers of the department share their assessment of both the dissertation and oral examination. Ultimately, the examination committee alone decides whether the candidate passed the oral examination and whether the work deserves the award of the ETH Medal (limited to the top 8% theses). Deliberation is confidential and may not be discussed externally.
7. The examination committee decides by majority vote; in the event of a tie, the chairperson provides the decisive vote. The result shall be recorded in writing (DV Art. 41 Abs. 3) The examination committee assesses the examination as "passed" or "failed". If the examination is passed, the examination committee also advises whether and which corrections are required for the revision of the doctoral thesis and provides the chair with a list of the corrections (e.g. more detailed descriptions of results, additions of discussion points as well as spelling and grammatical errors) (AB 11.8).
8. The doctoral candidate is called in the examination room where the chairperson of the examination committee notifies the committee decision (passed or not passed).
9. The chairperson promptly sends the relevant documents to the study administration office after the defence.