

Habilitation at D-GESS

As of 17 April 2012

Significance of the habilitation thesis

The habilitation thesis is evidence that the candidate has developed an independent and innovative research profile and is qualified for a professorship.

The habilitation thesis is the equivalent of the “second book” requirement in the Anglo-American academic world. It establishes the candidate’s independent research credentials and must be achieved in a field of research that is clearly separate from that of the candidate’s PhD dissertation. In terms of the level of achievement, habilitation corresponds to the status of an associate professor.

As a complement to the ETH Zurich Habilitation Ordinance of 2 June 2004, D-GESS has established the following procedure for habilitation:

1. Towards the end of their work on the thesis, candidates must present themselves to the Professor’s Conference (PC) of the department and deliver a short lecture with follow-up discussion (15 minutes each). This presentation is intended to provide an opportunity for all parties to get to know each other and for the PC to provide guidance to candidates on their next steps, if required.
2. Candidates will submit their application for habilitation (including a statement as to the subject for which they are requesting a Venia Legendi and the department in which they wish to teach) to the Rector’s Office, and inform the PC of their submission.
3. Habilitation can be achieved based on a monographic habilitation thesis or by way of cumulative habilitation. Cumulative habilitation requires at least five publishable or published papers, at least three of which must be the result of the candidate’s sole or clearly distinguished main authorship. Deviation from this rule may be permissible upon application if the candidate can demonstrate that other standards apply in a given subject. In the case of cumulative habilitation, the papers must be conjoined with a preface and/or conclusion.
4. Together with the habilitation thesis, the candidates must submit proof of their teaching qualifications. This may include a list of courses or lectures taught, teaching evaluations, and certificates of further education in the field of didactics, if applicable.
5. The Rector will forward the application to the department. The PC will then appoint an internal referee, a second examiner, and, as a rule, two external reviewers. The reviewers will take into account the originality and quality of the habilitation thesis or the papers and the candidate’s research work and teaching qualifications. If the reviewers include the candidate’s co-authors, the latter may not constitute a majority, nor may they pass judgment on the publications they have co-authored.
6. The PC will discuss the reviewers’ reports and decide on the continuation or termination of the habilitation procedure. If the reviewers do not return a favorable verdict on the submitted work, the Head of Department may inform the candidate accordingly and give him or her the opportunity to retract their application for habilitation with the Rector’s Office.
7. If the PC decides that the procedure can continue, the candidate must propose three topics for a trial lecture of 20-30 minutes’ duration. These topics may not be related to the topic of the candidate’s PhD dissertation or habilitation thesis. The PC selects one of these topics. The trial lecture should be in the nature of an ordinary course lecture and demonstrate the candidate’s teaching qualifications.
8. Finally, the PC submits to the Rector a request for approval or refusal of the Venia Legendi.

Approved by the D-GESS Professors’ Conference on 17 April 2012.