Guidelines: Chairperson of Doctoral Exams D-USYS

Legal basis: Ordinance on Doctoral Studies ETH Zurich

Most important:

- The doctoral exam is conducted by the examination committee (= committee). The committee is composed of:
  - the chairperson
  - the supervisor of the dissertation as examiner (as a rule ordinary, extraordinary or assistant professors of ETHZ; adjunct professors or PDs upon approval by the head of department)
  - one or several co-examiners (among them the advisors as well as an independent person)

- Both the written part (= dissertation) and the oral part (= doctoral exam) are evaluated.

- The dissertation is assessed by reviews (reports). The supervisor and the co-examiners of the dissertation write a confidential review (1-2 pages with a critical assessment of the innovation and quality of the thesis) to hand over to the chairperson of the committee. The review must express if the dissertation is accepted or not, and what revisions/corrections are required for the final acceptance of the dissertation.

- The oral exam takes at least 1 hour and extends to the research field of the dissertation. As a rule, the doctoral student represents his/her work in a 20 minute lecture. Afterwards, the doctoral student defends his/her dissertation in a discussion; first with the committee, and afterwards with the public, if requested.

- Immediately after the doctoral exam, the committee discusses confidentially the acceptance of the dissertation. The committee also decides, if the dissertation is to be nominated for the ETH medal award. In this case, the scientific excellence of the dissertation must be mentioned in the reviews.

Practical advise:

- During the exam:
  - the doctoral exam is open to the public.
  - the supervisor and the co-examiners hand in their original signed reviews to the chairperson at the doctoral exam. The reviews do not have to be sent to the departmental secretariat or the chairperson beforehand.
  - during the doctoral exam the duty of the chairperson is to monitor the exam according to the rules and fairness, as well as questions or notes about the dissertation.

- At the end of the doctoral exam:
  - the result of the exam is announced to the doctoral student by the chairperson according to the committee’s discussion.
  - it is to be pointed out to the doctoral student that the doctoral title may only be used once the deposit copies and the electronic version of the dissertation have been delivered. It is possible to receive a provisional confirmation from the departmental secretariat for the passed exam.

- After the doctoral exam:
  - after the doctoral exam the chairperson sends all original reviews to the departmental secretariat, with a note, which says, that the committee advises the acceptance of the dissertation.
  - if the committee applies for the ETH medal award, this must be mentioned in the note (for further information see "Guidelines: Award of Dissertations D-USYS with the ETH-Medal")
- an accepted dissertation will be approved at the next Departmental Conference. After the Departmental Conference and the doctoral graduation date, the thesis will be definitively confirmed.
- only after ETH informs the doctoral student about the successful acceptance of the dissertation, must the deposit copies be handed in.

Possible problems at the doctoral exam:
- one co-examiner fails to appear at the doctoral exam, or one review is missing: in exceptional cases, the co-examiner can be connected via video conference. If a co-examiner is absent, the exam can normally not take place. In any case the chairperson must be informed beforehand, he then decides, if the exam can take place. If a review is missing, but the contents are known, it is possible to hand in the review within the next few days. Please pay attention to the Ordinance concerning the minimal number of members for the committee (chairperson, supervisor, at least one co-examiner).
- the dissertation is not accepted: in fairness to the doctoral student, this should be clarified in advance. After an official denial, the doctoral student can repeat the exam within 6 months.
- the text needs corrections: the committee outlines the corrections for the doctoral student after the doctoral exam, preferably in written form. The dissertation is accepted once the corrections are completed and the supervisor informs the departmental secretariat.