DOCTORAL DISSERTATION AT AALTO UNIVERSITY

Update to the guidelines Formats of and General Quality Requirements for Doctoral Dissertations (30 August 2011) (Väitöskirjojen muodot ja yleiset laatuvaatimukset in Finnish)

Decree on University Degrees

Section 22 of the Government Decree on University Degrees as amended by the government decree 1039/2013 (Valtioneuvoston asetus yliopistojen tutkinnoista annetun asetuksen muuttamisesta), issued 19 December 2013, states the following:

Section 22 Requisite components of the doctoral degree

To be awarded a doctorate, the student must:
1) complete the required postgraduate studies;
2) demonstrate independent and critical thinking in the field of research, and
3) write a doctoral dissertation and defend it in public, or complete any other public theses or skills demonstrations required by the university.

Extent of the doctoral dissertation

At Aalto University, the goal is for the doctoral candidates to complete their degree in four years of full-time study, during which they complete the required doctoral studies and write a doctoral dissertation to be examined in a public examination of a doctoral dissertation. For this goal to be feasible, the workload of the degree shall be proportionate to the objective duration of studies. This shall be taken into account in the course of the supervision of the doctoral candidate.

General quality requirements for doctoral dissertations

- A doctoral dissertation shall contain new knowledge in the field it represents. In the field of art and design, the doctoral dissertation may also contain new methods of artistic creation or products or transactions, which fulfil high artistic demands.
- The doctoral dissertation must present the new results clearly and in a manner meeting the criteria set for scientific texts.
- The independent contribution to the research or artistic production shall be sufficient and clearly demonstrable.
- The research methods used shall fulfil the criteria set for scientific or art-based research.
- A doctoral dissertation shall conform to the principles of responsible conduct of research and adhere to ethically sustainable principles.
Formats and contents of the doctoral dissertation

Schools may approve doctoral dissertations in the forms described below. Schools take the decision on the acceptable formats of dissertations in the school and give further guidelines on the requirements for doctoral dissertations as needed.

In the field of art and design, a doctoral dissertation may also include other products than written products.

1. A single research piece or a monograph

A monograph is a coherent writing based on the work of the doctoral candidate and written by the candidate. The monograph may contain references to previous works by the doctoral candidate on the same topic.

The doctoral dissertation describes the research problem, the research goals, the used methods and results, and presents a summary of the key findings. The summary shall assess the significance of the study for the discipline.

2 Article-based doctoral dissertation

An article-based doctoral dissertation consists of a set of publications on a related set of problems, and a summary of the findings. The research plan is to be made in a way that makes it possible to complete the doctoral degree in four years of full-time study.

The articles included in the doctoral dissertation are published or submitted for publication in an acknowledged peer-reviewed forum in the discipline (for example a scientific publication series, conference proceedings or other work). Articles not yet accepted for publication can also be included in the doctoral dissertation. The number of publications required for the dissertation depends on their extent, scientific significance and quality as well as on the weight of the independent contribution of the doctoral candidate to the publications.

The articles may also include co-authored publications if the author's independent contribution to them can be demonstrated. An article can be included in several dissertations if the separate contribution of the doctoral candidate can be demonstrated. In the field of art and design, a doctoral dissertation may also include joint productions if the doctoral candidate has made an independent contribution to them.

The summary of the article-based doctoral dissertation is an independent entity, which provides an overview of the dissertation contents. The summary shall describe the research problem, research goals and methods, and presents a summary of the key findings. The summary shall assess the significance of the study for the discipline. The summary shall contain a list of the publications included in the thesis and describe the independent contribution of the candidate in each publication separately.
3. Essay-based doctoral dissertation

An essay-based doctoral dissertation consists of scientific essays and a summary. The essays and the summary shall deal with a single research problem or set of problems so that, when viewed as a whole, the independent contribution of the author meets the requirements set for a doctoral dissertation. When planning the set of essays one has to bear in mind that it has to be possible to complete the doctoral degree in four years of full-time study.

Each of the essays shall contain new results and viewpoints, and shall primarily be based on independent research by the author, but also collaboratively written essays may be accepted as part of the doctoral dissertation if the independent contribution of the author may be clearly demonstrated.

The number of essays required depends on their extent, scientific significance and quality as well as on the weight of the independent contribution of the author to the essays.

The summary describes the research problem, research goals and methods, and presents a summary of the key findings. The summary shall assess the significance of the study for the discipline. The summary contains a description of the independent contribution of the author in each of the essays.

4. Other works meeting corresponding scientific criteria

At its discretion, the school may also approve as a doctoral dissertation some other work meeting corresponding scientific criteria.

Open access to the doctoral dissertation and to the articles included in it

The doctoral dissertations of Aalto University are published in compliance with the Aalto University open access principles: http://libguides.aalto.fi/content.php?pid=624816&sid=5317294

Open access to doctoral dissertations is made possible by the authors depositing their work in the open access repository maintained by Aalto, Aaltodoc: https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/5.

Other guidelines

The Schools may issue further guidelines on doctoral dissertations.

The Aalto University Academic Affairs Committee has defined the policy for the supervision of doctoral candidates by its decision of 20 December 2011: Supervision of doctoral candidates.

Date into effect

This policy will come into effect 1 February 2016.