

Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture

DISSERTATION INSTRUCTIONS

These instructions shall be followed in the examination of dissertations for the Doctor of Arts (Art and Design) degree, the Doctor of Science (Architecture) degree and the Doctor of Philosophy degree at Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture. Any practices deviating from these instructions shall be dealt with case by case by the Doctoral Programme Committee (DPC).

The decrees forming the basis for the instructions:

- Universities Act 558/2009
- Government Decree on University Degrees 794/2004, including amendments 1039/2013
- Aalto University Bylaws
- School of Arts, Design and Architecture Bylaws and Degree Regulations
- Aalto University General Regulations on Teaching and Studying
- Regulations regarding dissertations and advising approved by the University Academic Affairs Committee

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1. Aims of the doctoral education

The aim of the doctoral degree is that students:

1. become well-versed in their field of research and its social significance;
2. gain the knowledge and skills needed in order to apply scientific research methods independently and critically and to produce new scientific knowledge within their own fields of research;
3. become conversant with the development, basic problems and research methods of their field of research;
4. gain such knowledge of the general theory of science and of other disciplines relating to their field of research as enables them to follow developments in them; and
5. gain adequate communication, language and other skills needed for working in broad-scale, expert and development duties and in international cooperation.

In the field of arts, the aim of doctoral education may be, in addition to the aims listed in items 1–5, for the student to gain the knowledge and skills necessary for independently conceiving methods of artistic creation or of creating products, objects or works that meet high artistic demands.

In the fields of architecture and landscape architecture, the aim of doctoral education may be, in addition to the aims listed in items 1–5, for the student to acquire a deep understanding of the significance of artistic expression in defining his or her research question.

1.2 Requisite components of the doctoral degree

Students admitted to a doctoral programme shall:

- 1) complete the required postgraduate studies;
- 2) demonstrate independent and critical thinking in relation to their field of research; and
- 3) write a doctoral dissertation and defend it in public.

2. Quality requirements and forms of dissertation

2.1 General quality requirements for a dissertation

The dissertation shall contain new scientific knowledge in the field it represents. In the field of art and design the dissertation may also contain knowledge and skills for conceiving of methods of artistic creation or of creating products, objects or works that meet high artistic demands.

The dissertation shall clearly set forth the new findings. The candidate's own contribution to the research or to the artistic production must be of a sufficient degree and clearly stated. Research methods must meet the standards generally set for research.

The conduct of the research must conform to good scientific practice and ethical principles of research.

2.2 Various forms of doctoral dissertation

An approved doctoral dissertation may be a single study (a monograph) that has not been appeared in a published form in full before. The monograph shall form a coherent entity and be the result of the researcher's independent work. It may contain references to other publications produced by the author dealing with the same problems.

Alternatively, the dissertation may be an article-based doctoral dissertation, which consists of a set of publications on a related set of problems, and a summary of the findings. The summary shall describe the research problem and research goals and methods, and present 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.

The article dissertation must include at least **3 full-length articles** (e.g. JUFO 1–3). These articles must have been approved for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal, in a similarly peer-reviewed conference publication, or as a chapter in a peer-reviewed book. In addition to the three articles, the dissertation may include other publications, shorter articles or artistic components. For one of these the publication process may still be ongoing. For well-grounded reasons the Doctoral Programme Committee may also approve other kinds of compilations of publications as a dissertation.

The articles may also include co-authored publications if the candidate's independent contribution to them can be demonstrated. If the contribution is not demonstrated in the publication, an account of the contribution of the candidate and of the other authors must be given in the summary. The candidate must ask and receive the approval of the other authors for the account given. The candidate must be the first author of at least one of the articles.

As a rule the articles included in the dissertation must have been published during the time the study right for the doctoral degree was valid. Articles that fulfil the academic criteria set for a dissertation and that were written during earlier doctoral studies, for instance, or during work for a research institute, may constitute an exception to this rule. The doctoral candidate must discuss any earlier published articles to be included in the dissertation already at the start of the studies.

Artistic productions as part of the dissertation

In the field of art and design, a dissertation may also include an art production, a series of art productions meaningfully connected to each other, or a product development project. As a rule the artistic components to be included in the dissertation must have been created during the validity of the study right.

The written component of the dissertation (thesis) has to be in a dialogic and analytic relation to the art productions or product development project, and the candidate has to present in the thesis the targets, methods and findings of the production, series of productions or product development project. Such a dissertation can include artistic components, which can be joint productions or projects, provided that the independent contribution of the candidate is clearly indicated. The independent contribution of the candidate and that of the other authors must be explained in the written component. The doctoral candidate must ask and receive approval from the other authors in order to include this account.

Other

At its discretion after due consideration the School may also approve other kind of works as dissertations if they fulfil the quality requirements of dissertations.

3. Instructions regarding students, supervising professors and advisors

A written supervision plan is made for each student. The plan is an agreement by the supervising professor, the advisor(s) and the student regarding their respective responsibilities, rights and duties. The responsibilities are described in detail in the instructions 'Supervision of doctoral candidates at Aalto University'.

3.1 Student

Each year the student must enrol as either an attending or a non-attending student. The student must be enrolled as an attending student both for the semester during which the dissertation is to be examined and for the semester during which the decision on the degree is to be published.

A student who starts doctoral studies commits to perseverance and target-oriented studying and research work. In order to receive advising the student commits to follow their confirmed personal study plan and research plan.

The personal study plan determines the full or part-time status of the student. If there are any changes the student must notify the doctoral programme of them. The student must also notify the programme of any change in the language of the degree from that which was determined when the student was admitted to the programme.

In addition the student commits to follow the instructions on good research practice given by the Finnish Advisory Board on Research Integrity. The doctoral candidate and the advisor(s) must together assess whether the research frame of the dissertation is such that it needs to be pre-assessed in the Research Ethics Committee.

3.2 The supervising professor

The supervising professor is confirmed by the Doctoral Programme Committee with the admission decision or by the director of the doctoral programme. To ensure continuity, the supervising professor must be a tenure track professor of the School. The Dean of the School decides at a proposal of the Doctoral Programme Committee about possible other professors of the School who, for a special reason, may act as supervising professors, even if they are not on the tenure track.

The supervising professor is in charge of the supervision arrangements for the doctoral candidate. The supervising professor goes through the personal study plan of the candidate, and follows up on the progress of the studies and of the research work on a regular basis. The supervising professor may assign some of his or her duties to the thesis advisor or act as the thesis advisor him/herself.

The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral candidate is aware of the

requirements for a doctoral dissertation and of the stages included in the preliminary examination and the public examination. The supervising professor needs to make sure that the doctoral candidate follows good scientific practice and intellectual property statutes.

When the manuscript of the doctoral dissertation is complete, it may only be submitted for preliminary examination after the supervising professor has issued a statement confirming that the manuscript is ready. The supervising professor ensures that the doctoral candidate makes any necessary corrections to the dissertation manuscript that were proposed by the pre-examiner.

3.3 The thesis advisor

At a proposal of the Department, the Doctoral Programme Committee appoints one or several thesis advisors for the doctoral candidate. At least one of them must have a doctor's degree. If the dissertation includes artistic productions or product development projects, at least one of the thesis advisors must have adequate artistic qualifications and superior knowledge of the field in question. The thesis advisor may not serve as a pre-examiner or opponent of the same dissertation.

The thesis advisors tutor the student in composing, following and, if needed, revising the study plan and the research proposal. They instruct the student in writing the thesis, in planning and carrying out the research work, the artistic work or the design work. The thesis advisors also guide the student in independent learning and refer the student to other researchers in the same field or to those interested in applying the research results. Thesis advisors also encourage the doctoral candidate to publish actively in the publication forums of the field.

The thesis advisor(s) shall give a written statement to the Doctoral Programme Committee confirming that the dissertation is ready to be submitted for pre-examination.

4. Pre-examination and permission for defence

4.1 Pre-examination of the dissertation

The candidate is to inform the supervising professor about the submission of the dissertation for pre-examination well in advance. After receiving the approval of the supervising professor and the advisor, the candidate submits the dissertation in electronic form to the secretary of the Doctoral Programme Committee. If the pre-examiner so wishes, the candidate also needs to submit a printed copy. Abstracts in English and in either Finnish or Swedish need to be appended to the manuscript.

The language of the manuscript submitted to pre-examination must be the same as for the final publication. The dissertation may be published in Finnish, Swedish or English, or with the permission of the Doctoral Programme Committee, in some other language. The Committee may ask for a separate statement on the quality of the language used in the manuscript and demand proofreading.

If the dissertation includes an art production, a series of art productions or a product development project, the candidate shall also submit three (3) sets of documentation of the productions or projects. The productions shall be pre-examined based on the documentation if this was agreed earlier on well-warranted reasons, or else the doctoral candidate shall provide the pre-examiners with an opportunity to view the original productions or projects together with the manuscript.

The supervising professor shall notify the doctoral candidate of the proposed pre-examiners at the latest by the time the proposal is submitted to the secretary of the Committee. If the doctoral candidate is dissatisfied with the proposal, he/she is to inform the secretary of it before the meeting in which the matter is to be considered.

The pre-examiner must either have a doctor's degree or be considered to have equivalent merits. The pre-examiners are independent experts in the field, and external to the Aalto University school in question. A pre-examiner cannot have had significant collaboration, such as co-authored publications, with the candidate. Nor may a pre-examiner have had significant collaboration, such as co-authored

publications with the advisor of the candidate, especially at any time during the previous five years. A person who has earlier pre-examined one or several artistic components of the dissertation may also pre-examine the completed work. A third pre-examiner with a doctor's degree shall be appointed if one of the pre-examiners was nominated on the basis of artistic merits.

Based on the written statements of the supervising professor and advisor(s), the Doctoral Programme Committee decides on submitting the dissertation for pre-examination and nominates at least two (2) pre-examiners after checking their CVs.

The secretary of the Committee informs the pre-examiners of their nomination and sends the manuscript to them within a week.

4.2. Permission for public defence / publication

The pre-examiners shall submit carefully considered written statements on the dissertation within 1.5 months after receiving the manuscript of the doctoral dissertation or written thesis. The Doctoral Programme Committee decides on granting permission for a public defence. The student must be given the opportunity to submit a reply to the statements of the pre-examiners before the decision is made.

The statements may contain suggestions for corrections and improvements, but should also explicitly indicate whether the pre-examiner recommends that the doctoral candidate be granted permission to defend the dissertation in a public examination, or whether the candidate should be denied this permission.

A positive statement is not precluded by deficiencies that can be remedied by simple revision, or by supplying additional material or carrying out further reading of the research literature when such tasks requires no more than moderate effort. Pre-examiners may enclose a separate list of corrections with the statement, or return the manuscript with their written comments to the secretary of the Committee, who will forward it to the candidate. The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that any and all corrections and changes required by the pre-examiners are made.

In the event that the pre-examiner advises the doctoral candidate to make significant corrections, the Doctoral Programme Committee will discuss granting permission for a public defence on the condition that an approval from the pre-examiner as well as a written statement from the supervising professor are received assuring that adequate revisions have been made.

If the dissertation has serious deficiencies, the pre-examiner(s) must recommend that the doctoral candidate be denied permission for a public defence. In the case of one or several pre-examiners rejecting the permission for a public defence, the candidate has the right to stop the examination process. After stopping the process the student may discuss with the supervising professor the possibility of continuing to write his or her dissertation. The candidate may ask for a new pre-examination after he/she has made the changes the pre-examiners have required in their statements and/or any other required corrections, and if the supervising professor is in favour of starting a new pre-examination process. If these conditions are met, the matter will be processed again from the beginning, starting with the selection of pre-examiners.

If the student chooses not to stop the process despite negative statement(s), she/he can request that the matter be processed by the Committee, submitting a reply to the statements before the Committee makes a decision.

The Doctoral Programme Committee may, at its discretion, require that the language of the manuscript be proofread. A certificate that the language proofreading has been performed is to be submitted to the secretary.

5. Instructions for pre-examination of artistic components before the completion of the dissertation manuscript

The doctoral candidate must inform the supervising professor and his/her thesis advisor of the artistic component about the time and place of the public presentation of the production presentation no later than two (2) months before the event. The thesis advisor of the artistic component assesses whether the production is ready for submission to a preliminary examination and delivers a written statement to the Doctoral Programme Committee. It is the responsibility of the advisor of the artistic component to ensure that no permission is granted for unfinished productions to be presented in public.

If a production needs to be pre-examined *in situ*, for example, in an exhibition hall, the Department shall make a proposal to nominate two (2) pre-examiners at least one month prior to the presentation of the production. At least one of them must have a doctor's degree and at least one must be from outside the School.

The Department shall notify the doctoral candidate of the proposed pre-examiners at the same time as the proposal is submitted to the secretary of the Committee, as before the pre-examiners are appointed, the candidate, if dissatisfied with the proposal, must be given the opportunity to make a statement explaining his/her reasons.

The pre-examiners are to be provided with the research or production plan written by the doctoral candidate, or some other written report based on which they can form an opinion on the dissertation and the artistic component as a whole.

The pre-examiners of an artistic production shall submit their carefully considered written statements (or a joint statement) within one (1) month after examining the production. They are to submit a statement to the Doctoral Programme Committee on whether they recommend approving the artistic component's inclusion in the dissertation. This statement is the equivalent of proposing permission for a public examination of the written component. The doctoral candidate is offered an opportunity to reply to the statements before a final decision is made.

Arts projects in a series or art productions in a series are pre-examined in the way stated above. The same or different pre-examiners may be nominated for each case, and they are given the opportunity to read the previous statements.

The presentations are public and must be arranged so that they can be attended without too much difficulty. The doctoral candidate is responsible for sending the invitations to the pre-examiners and the members of the Doctoral Programme Committee. At the public presentation, the candidate shall state that the presentation is part of a dissertation.

The doctoral candidate is always responsible for recording or documenting the production. The Department must help the doctoral candidate in organising to ensure that the documentation is of high quality. The documentation must give a clear picture of the content and exhibition of the production or project. For specific reasons, the production(s) may be pre-examined after they took place based on the documentation, if the supervising professor authorises this after discussing the matter with the doctoral candidate and the advisor.

The documentation must be delivered to the secretary of the Doctoral Programme Committee within one month of the pre-examination and before the Committee decides on approving the artistic component's inclusion in the dissertation. In the case of exhibitions, 10–30 photos showing the works and how they were or displayed are required. For performances, a video of 2–5 minutes as well as 5–10 photos are required.

6. Public defence and approval of the dissertation

6.1 Public defence

The dissertation will be examined in a public dissertation defence. Instructions on the procedure for this are given in a separate manual.

The doctoral candidate schedules the public defence together with the opponent and the custos. The candidate takes care of the entire arrangements concerning the defence together with the Department. The public defence takes place at Aalto University. In the event that productions or other material essential to the dissertation cannot be presented on campus or with the University's own equipment, the public defence may take place at other premises.

The language to be used in the public defence is Finnish, Swedish or English or, with the consent of the Doctoral Programme Committee, some other language.

6.2. The opponent

On the proposal of the Department, the Doctoral Programme Committee appoints one or two opponents who, if possible, have the title of docent (*dosentti*) or equivalent merits. The opponent(s) should be among the best experts within the field in Finland or abroad. The advisor of the dissertation may not be appointed as opponent, while an external pre-examiner, on the other hand, may. The doctoral candidate has the right to lodge a complaint about the selection of the opponent before a final decision is made.

6.3 The custos

The Doctoral Programme Committee appoints the supervising professor as the custos of the public defence. Some other representative of the School with a doctor's degree in the same research field may also serve as the custos. The custos is responsible for guiding the opponent in matters concerning the procedures followed at the School of Arts, Design and Architecture in the examination of dissertations and public defences. It is the role of the custos to discuss the grade with the opponent(s) and familiarise them with the grading scale used at the School and the principles of grading to be observed.

6.4 Publication and distribution of the dissertation

The public defence shall be announced on the official website of the School ten (10) days prior to the event. At the same time, the dissertation or the written thesis must be displayed in public, and it must be announced where the art production, series of art productions or product development project or the documentation of any of the above can be viewed. The chairperson of the Doctoral Programme Committee can, after receiving a written application, shorten the deadline for the announcement to five (5) days before the defence. The secretary of the Committee takes care of the public notice.

Twenty (20) free copies of the dissertation published in book form are to be submitted to the School. The Committee decides case by case on the distribution of dissertations published in some other way.

A title sheet shall be attached to the copies of the dissertation distributed before the defence, stating that the permission for public defence has been granted by the Doctoral Programme Committee of the Aalto University School of Arts, Design and Architecture, the time and place of the public defence and the name of the opponent.

6.5 Approval and grading of the dissertation

The opponent or the opponents must submit a written statement within two (2) weeks of the public defence to the Doctoral Programme Committee. The opponents may also give a joint statement. The statement must indicate whether approval or rejection of the dissertation is recommended, and in the case of approval, propose a grade.

The statement is sent to the members of the Doctoral Programme Committee and the doctoral candidate at least five (5) days before the matter will be considered by the Doctoral Programme

Committee, or later, with the consent of the doctoral candidate.

If someone at the public defence of the dissertation announces that they will submit comments on the dissertation in writing, such comments must also be submitted to the School within two weeks of the defence.

Before the dissertation is graded, the doctoral candidate may submit a reply to the opponent's statement. The candidate shall also be given an opportunity to reply to any written comments announced at the defence.

The Doctoral Programme Committee decides on the approval or rejection of the dissertation and its grade.

The following scale is used in the grading of the dissertation: failed, pass, and pass with distinction.

Earning a pass with distinction requires that the dissertation be among the top 20% of the dissertations published internationally in its field. The criteria include that:

- the doctoral dissertation be written in clearly and with correct usage, and the referencing be faultless;
- the articles of an article-based dissertation be published in international series of reputable standing in the field, or in similar peer-reviewed works;
- the author have made a significant independent contribution to the findings of the dissertation;
- the findings be exceptionally significant for the research field;
- the dissertation have particular scientific merit, and any included artistic components or product development projects meet particularly high artistic demands;
- the dissertation be defended excellently at the public examination.

6.6 Appeal against the grading of the dissertation

The doctoral candidate may submit a written claim for rectification of the grading of the dissertation to the University Board of Examiners, in writing, within 14 days of receiving the decision.

Reassessment requests should be addressed to:

Aalto University Board of Examiners

Registry

PO BOX 11000

00076 AALTO, Finland

or

kirjaamo@aalto.fi