Artistic components

(Following the Aalto ARTS Dissertation Instruction in force from 1 August 2019)

In the field of art, a dissertation may 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 components must also be pre-examined.

The artistic component(s) have to be in a dialogic and analytic relation with the written component of the dissertation. The candidate has to present in the written component the targets, methods and findings of the artistic component(s). The way in which the artistic component becomes part of the research can vary according to the methodological background employed. It is expected that the artistic component articulates or discloses its own research orientation—the capacity of the practice to engage with new kinds of insight, knowledge and content.

The presentations of the artistic component, such as exhibitions, must be public and must be arranged so that they are accessible. At the public presentation, the candidate shall state that the presentation is part of a dissertation (e.g. in writing in the exhibition materials).

The Doctoral Programme Committee appoints at least one advisor who must hold a doctor’s degree. In case of an artistic or practice-based dissertation, a second advisor, who does not hold a doctor’s degree, can be appointed based on artistic merit or competence in the area of research.

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The doctoral candidate must request from the Doctoral Programme Committee the pre-examination of an artistic component no later than two months before the event. Before pre-examination, the doctoral candidate must send an invitation to the presentation and a written report accompanying the artistic component to the secretary of the Doctoral Programme Committee, to be given to the pre-examiners and the members of the Doctoral Programme Committee.

In the written report, the doctoral candidate should clarify the place, role and stage of the artistic component within the intended whole of the research project. The report should address the dialogical relation of the artistic component to the written component and also discuss the choice and role of the venue and the various contexts of presentation. The report must indicate the venue, time and form of the presentation in the report. The length of the report should be 5-10 pages.

At the start of your studies, discuss with your supervising professor whether your artistic component(s) need to be pre-examined separately before the pre-examination of the written component or together with it after you have finished your research.

Make a request to the Doctoral Programme Committee for the pre-examination of your artistic component no later than two months before the event: Applications and forms

The artistic component can be pre-examined separately before the pre-examination of the written component, in case it needs to be pre-examined in situ (for example, in an exhibition hall) or for some other compelling reasons presented by the doctoral candidate and the Department and accepted by the Doctoral Programme Committee. If the component(s) has not be pre-examined separately, they will be pre-examined together with the written component. In the latter case the pre-examination takes place based on the documentation of the component(s), or the candidate shall provide the pre-examiners with an opportunity to view the original productions or projects.

Upon a proposal by the Department, the Doctoral Programme Committee appoints at least two pre-examiners for the artistic component. The pre-examiners must possess sufficient research and artistic competence and authority in the dissertation’s research field. At least one of them must hold a doctor’s degree. The pre-examiners are independent experts in the field, external to the school, and preferably have also gained expertise in the field of the dissertation at the international level.

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

Each artistic component of the doctoral candidate is pre-examined separately. The same or different pre-examiners may be nominated for each component, and they are given the opportunity to read the previous statements.

Pre-examiners are expected to consider the combination of three interrelated aspects:

1. relation and relevance of the work to the candidate’s research topic
2. artistic implementation of the work
3. context of presentation

‘Relevance to research’ refers to the dialogical relation of the artistic component and the intended whole of the research project. ‘Artistic implementation’ includes the relation of the artistic component to the genre of practice, and its technical aspects of presentation. ‘Context of presentation’ refers to the venue or forum as well as to the social, professional and cultural discussions generated. The forum should be meaningful for the purpose of the project.

The pre-examination is part of the process whereby peers develop the community, practices and institutions responsible for research in the art and design fields. One aspect in the artistic component’s evaluation can be how the work engages with and addresses the ongoing developments in the field and potentially establishes a new understanding among researchers.

It should be acknowledged that in the research context, artistic and design works often develop new and experimental forms and practices. The assessment should therefore take into account not only whether or not the artistic component adheres to particular artistic and/or research standards, but how possible non-compliance can be appropriate, given the particular practice or form of the artistic component. The artistic component can represent only partial completion of the research.
It is expected that the assessment is conducted in a critical but constructive way. The purpose of the pre-examination is not only to evaluate the work but to help in identifying the work's qualities and strengths in the context of the planned work. It is of value that the pre-examiner engages deeply with the work and clearly and dialogically explains his or her findings and suggestions.

After carefully taking into account the above factors, the pre-examiners shall submit their written statements to the Doctoral Programme Committee within one month after examining the production. The pre-examination statements submitted to the Doctoral Programme Committee should clarify whether or not the pre-examiner recommends approval of the artistic component's inclusion in the dissertation. In addition, the statement can include suggestions that assist the doctoral candidate in developing his or her research.

The doctoral candidate is offered an opportunity to reply to the statements before a final decision is made by the Doctoral Programme Committee.

The doctoral candidate is always responsible for recording or documenting the production. The documentation must give a clear picture of the content and exhibition of the production or project.

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 components not pre-examined separately, the documentation must be delivered together with the written component submitted for pre-examination. In the case of exhibitions, 10–30 photos showing the works and how they were displayed are required. For performances, a video of 2–5 minutes as well as 5–10 photos are required. The documentation may include a text document. Submit the documentation as one PDF file (or PDF + video file).

Artistic components can also 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.