For supervising professors and thesis advisors

Who can act as a supervising professor or a thesis advisor?

- The Doctoral Programme Committee assigns one of the professors in charge of the research field as the supervising professor for the student (Degree regulations on Doctoral Education, Section 3). The supervising professor must be a tenure-track professor of the school, though for special reasons, a non-tenure track professor of the school may be appointed by decision of the dean.
- According to the Degree regulations, also a co-supervisor can be assigned by the Doctoral Programme Committee. A co-supervisor can be assigned only in exceptional cases on reasonable grounds because of multidisciplinarity of the dissertation or in Cotutelle-agreements.
- The Doctoral Programme Committee assigns also one or more thesis advisors. The thesis advisor shall hold a Doctor of Science (Technology) or a similar academic doctoral degree. As necessary, the supervising professor of the thesis may also act as the thesis advisor (Degree regulations on Doctoral Education, Section 3).
- The doctoral education result can be shared between Aalto schools

Division of the education result between Schools of Aalto (5.12.2014)

Under the Aalto funding model, the schools receive result-based funding based on the number of doctoral degrees awarded. Aalto University has agreed to enable the division of doctoral education results between its schools for the purposes of resource allocation under the Aalto funding model, in cases where the degree is produced jointly by two schools. The change is designed to boost doctoral-level collaboration between the Aalto schools and further the Aalto strategic goal of promoting multidisciplinary research.

It should be noted that the division of degrees is only a statistical tool developed for the purposes of the funding model. For the funding model the degree is divided so that both schools earn 0.5 degrees. The division of degrees does not have any other effects on the school-level statistics on doctoral degrees.

Principles for dividing the doctoral degree between schools

The division of doctoral degrees for funding purposes between the Aalto schools requires clear evidence of collaboration. Dividing a degree follows uniform principles in the university:

- The doctoral candidate and the supervising professor are from the same school. In addition to the supervising professor, the doctoral candidate must have a co-supervisor at the partner school.
- A person who can act as a supervising professor in his/her own school can also act as a co-supervisor.
- The supervising professor and the co-supervisor draft a joint proposal for dividing the degree between the schools in which the research work is done (evidence of collaboration). The freely formulated signed proposal and the supervision plan is sent to the doctoral programme of the school of the doctoral candidate.
- The proposal must be made as early in the studies as possible (preferably with the application for doctoral studies).
- The decision on dividing the doctoral degree with the partner school rests with the dean of the school of the doctoral student (since this school “gives up” 50% of the result-based funding for this degree). The decision of the dean is communicated to the doctoral programme of the partner school.
- The doctoral student carries out the doctoral studies according to the process of his/her school and the degree will be awarded to the student only from his/her own school.
- Only the name of the school of the student is mentioned on the doctoral dissertation cover, but on the reverse of the title page the name of the co-supervisor should be mentioned. The collaboration of the two schools can be mentioned e.g. in the preface or in the introduction part of the dissertation.

Dividing doctoral degrees is an option for doctoral degrees earned at the beginning of 2015 or later. Thus the degree cannot be divided retrospectively.

- Every doctoral student is assigned also one or more thesis advisors.

The Doctoral Programme Committee assigns also one or more thesis advisors. The thesis advisor shall hold a Doctor of Science (Technology) or a similar academic doctoral degree and have expertise in the subject area of the doctoral dissertation. The duties of the thesis advisor are defined in the supervision plan of the doctoral candidate.

As necessary, the supervising professor of the dissertation may also act as the thesis advisor.

Accepting new doctoral candidates

- The Doctoral Programme of the School of Engineering can be applied twice a year.
- The supervising professor and the applicant shall go through the applicant’s research plan, study plan, supervision plan and funding. Full-time doctoral students must be able to spend 80 % of their working hours on doctoral studies. Those applying for a full-time study mode must write a funding plan. Full-time students are expected to complete their degree within four years.
- By recommending an applicant as a doctoral student, the supervising professor will commit to act as the applicant’s supervising professor throughout the doctoral studies
- If you’re recommending an applicant who has completed his/her Master’s degree outside Finland, please make sure that the applicant brings along either certified copies or the original degree papers when he/she comes to Finland (if the papers are not sent via regular mail). Regular copies/colored, scanned pdf versions are not sufficient!

Supervision of doctoral candidates

- Duties of the supervising professor and thesis advisor; Rights and responsibilities of doctoral candidates
• The supervising professor is in charge of the supervision arrangements for the doctoral candidate until the degree has been completed. The supervising professor agrees upon the division of responsibilities between him/herself and the thesis advisor(s), and the duties of each party are stated in the supervision plan. The supervising professor may also act as the thesis advisor.

• The supervising professor and the doctoral candidate agree on the candidate’s personal study plan. The supervising professor and the candidate discuss the progress of the studies on a regular basis (at least once a year), and the theoretical studies need to be confirmed after all the theoretical studies to be included in the degree have been completed. It is possible to give the students credit for e.g. reading assignments, and attending conferences and summer schools, and these can be included in the theoretical studies. See also the doctoral programme’s recommendations for credits given for individual study attainments.

• The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral candidate is aware of the general quality requirements for a doctoral dissertation and of the stages included in the preliminary examination and the public examination of the dissertation.

Duties of the supervising professor and thesis advisor

The supervising professor is in charge of the supervision arrangements for the doctoral candidate. The supervising professor is obligated to supervise those doctoral candidates who have enrolled as attending students, who have progressed in their studies according to their personal study plan, and who report on the progress of their studies on a regular basis. The supervising professor may either assign some of the duties mentioned below to the thesis advisor. The thesis advisor shall hold a Doctor of Science (Technology) or a similar academic doctoral degree. As necessary, the supervising professor of the thesis may also act as the thesis advisor. The supervising professor agrees upon the division of responsibilities between him/herself and the thesis advisor(s), and the duties of each party are stated in the supervision plan. What is said below of the duties of the supervising professor shall apply, as appropriate, also to the thesis advisor, where compliant with the division of responsibilities specified in the plan.

The responsibilities of the supervising professor are:

• The supervising professor is responsible for the supervision of the doctoral candidate and supports the implementation of the financing plan. The supervising professor provides guidance in the execution of the research and instructs the doctoral candidate in critical and independent thinking in research and artistic activities. The supervising professor encourages the doctoral candidate to actively publish his/her research results in the publication forums of the field of research/art in question, and guides him/her in publication writing. The supervising professor supports and encourages the doctoral candidate. The supervising professor is also responsible for ensuring that full-time doctoral candidates are not burdened excessively with duties other than doctoral research work. Participation in teaching is, however, part of doctoral training and as such obligatory for the doctoral candidate.

• The supervising professor goes through the personal study plan of the doctoral candidate, which includes a plan of executing the research work. In addition, the supervising professor follows up on the progress of the studies and that of the research work on a regular basis: the supervising professor and the student discuss the progress of the studies on a regular basis, and the personal study plan is updated accordingly as necessary. At minimum, the plan is checked once a year. This follow-up requirement concerns full-time and part-time doctoral candidates in doctoral programmes.

• The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that the doctoral candidate is aware of good scientific practice and the ethical principles followed in his/her field of research as well as of the regulations concerning immaterial property rights, and monitors that the candidate adheres to such principles. To this end, the supervising professor and the doctoral candidate have a discussion at the start of the supervision relationship in order to look into the questions of research ethics and related practices relevant to the work of the student.

• 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 of the dissertation. 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 for preliminary examination. The supervising professor makes sure that the doctoral candidate makes the necessary corrections proposed to the doctoral dissertation manuscript by the preliminary examiner.

• The supervising professor assists the doctoral candidate in career planning, and ensures that the doctoral studies and research process equip the doctoral candidate with not only research skills but also transferable skills.

Rights and responsibilities of doctoral candidates

When starting doctoral studies, the doctoral candidate commits to long-term and goal-oriented study and research. The doctoral candidate has a right to study in accordance with the personal study plan and to receive knowledgeable guidance in his/her studies on a regular basis. In return for such guidance, the doctoral candidate commits to studying in accordance with the confirmed study plan and the associated research proposal. Eligibility for supervision also requires enrolling as an attending student at the university.

In addition, the doctoral candidate commits to acting in compliance with the guidelines of the National Advisory Board on Research Ethics on good scientific practice.

The responsibilities of the doctoral candidate are

• preparing, in collaboration with the supervising professor, a personal study plan for doctoral studies at the start of the doctoral studies and updating it as necessary;

• negotiating with the supervising professor on the choice of research topic and preparing a thorough research proposal under the supervision of the supervising professor; giving an account of the objectives, contents, methods and schedule of the research;

• familiarising him/herself with the ethical principles of scientific research and acting in compliance with good scientific practice in his/her research;

• carrying out research independently and in a self-directed manner in accordance with the research proposal and within the limits of the research project, and actively publishing results in the publication forums of the field;

• providing teaching related to the research field and communicating the results of his/her research to others;

• aiming at, together with the supervising professor, securing funding for the doctoral studies;

• reporting on the progress of the research to the supervising professor on a regular basis;
• notifying the supervising professor of any changes necessary to the study plan, or of any problems with following the plan and
• annually enrolling at the university.

If collaboration with your supervising professor does not work:

If the collaboration with your supervising professor does not work, you can always contact the students services of the doctoral programme and discuss how to proceed. Here are a few choices:

• Discuss with your supervising professor about it
• Ask if you could get an additional thesis advisor (e.g. if your professor is too busy).
• Discuss with HR at your department or the department Head.
• Discuss with the Head of the doctoral programme

If the supervising professor or thesis advisor of the doctoral candidate changes

• If the candidate’s supervising professor or thesis advisor changes (e.g. if the topic of the dissertation changes, or the supervising professor retires), the new supervising professor or thesis advisor has to be confirmed officially by the Chair of the Doctoral Programme Committee.

• To confirm the change of supervising professor or thesis advisor, form 309 must be submitted to the doctoral programme.

Examination and evaluation of licentiate theses

• The Doctoral Programme Committee decides on an independent examiner for the licentiate thesis based on the supervising professor's proposal. The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that the examiner is aware of the grading criteria of licentiate theses.

• The supervising professor submits the manuscript of the licentiate thesis to the examiner and requests its examination, and a statement of it. The Doctoral Programme Committee shall evaluate the licentiate thesis based on the examiner’s statement.

Pre-examination of doctoral dissertations

• The supervising professor examines the dissertation manuscript and, by signing the application for pre-examination, confirms that the manuscript is ready for pre-examination. The purpose of the pre-examination is not to improve the dissertation with the help of the examiners. The pre-examiners are to examine the completed dissertation and then write an independent evaluation on whether the dissertation is ready for publication.

• The supervising professor goes through the doctoral candidate’s written clarification of his/her contribution to the dissertation and approves the contribution as sufficient for a doctoral dissertation by his/her signature. It should also be written in the clarification if the author has used subcontracting or other outsourcing services in his/her thesis work.

• The supervising professor shall propose two independent pre-examiners to the dissertation by filling in the form for permission for public defence of the dissertation. The Doctoral Programme Committee decides on the examiners based on the supervising professor's proposition.

• After the pre-examiners have been decided on, the Doctoral Programme Committee takes responsibility on the pre-examination process and communicates with the pre-examiners. The Doctoral Programme Committee sends the manuscript to the pre-examiners and their statements to the doctoral candidate and the supervising professor.

• The supervising professor takes care of that the doctoral candidate makes all the necessary corrections to the dissertation manuscript that have come up as a result of the pre-examination process. The Doctoral Programme Committee grants the permission for public defence.

The public defence

• The supervising professor proposes an opponent to the public defence. The Doctoral Programme Committee decides on the opponent and the date of the defence based on the supervising professor’s proposition. The supervising professor acts as the Custos of the defence.

• Arrangements for the public defence along with the opponent’s travel arrangements and the opponent’s remuneration are taken care of at the department.

Evaluation of dissertations

• The supervising professor is responsible for ensuring that the opponent is aware of the grading criteria of dissertations, and also for making sure the opponent is familiar with the opponents’ instructions.

• The Doctoral Programme Committee shall evaluate the dissertation based on the opponent’s written statement and grade proposition along with other statements, if applicable.

Temporal study right for visiting doctoral candidates at Aalto

• It is possible for a visiting international doctoral candidate, to get a temporal study right at Aalto to be able to take courses while here at Aalto. A general requirement is that the doctoral candidate is enrolled at his/her home university and the traineeship is part of his/her doctoral degree at the home university (e.g. research work for the doctoral dissertation).
• If your doctoral candidate would need a temporal study right at Aalto, please ask your doctoral candidate to contact the doctoral programme learning services