Degree Regulations on Doctoral Education (in force from 1 August 2021)

The concepts used in these degree regulations are defined below.

**Doctoral student**
A person registered as an attending or non-attending doctoral student in an Aalto doctoral programme. The wording doctoral candidate is also used.

**Supervising professor**
An Aalto University professor whom an Aalto school has appointed to hold overall responsibility for the degree of the doctoral student and the related supervision arrangements as well as for preparing the supervision plan with the doctoral student. The supervising professor may also act as the thesis advisor.

**Co-supervisor**
An Aalto University professor, or a professor of some other Finnish or foreign university, whom the school has for special reasons appointed to share, together with the supervising professor, overall responsibility for the degree of the doctoral student and for the related supervision arrangements. The co-supervisor may also act as the thesis advisor.

**Thesis advisor**
A school-appointed person who has expertise in the subject area of the doctoral thesis. The duties of the thesis advisor are defined in the supervision plan of the doctoral student.

**Research field**
An area of academic research in which the school has agreed to provide doctoral education. The research fields of the School of Business are called major subjects.

**Examiner**
A school-appointed expert in the subject area of the licentiate thesis. To be eligible for appointment as an examiner, a person must hold a degree equivalent to a licentiate degree.

**Preliminary examiner**
A school-appointed expert who is suitably qualified in the area of arts or science studied in the doctoral thesis. To be eligible for appointment as a preliminary examiner, a person must hold a doctoral degree or have sufficient artistic qualifications.

**Opponent**
A school-appointed expert who is suitably qualified in the area of arts or science studied in the doctoral thesis. To be eligible for appointment as an opponent, a person must hold a doctoral degree.

**Permission for public defense**
Permission for public defense means permission for publication. Once given permission for public defense, the student may publish the doctoral thesis and defend it in the public examination.

**Doctoral programme**
An administrative entity responsible for doctoral education, established by decision of the president. Each doctoral student of Aalto University is a student in one of the university's doctoral programmes.
2. Organisation of doctoral education

The education leading to a licentiate or a doctoral degree is planned and organised by the doctoral programme on a research-field-specific basis. The school decides the doctoral research fields and designates the professors to be in charge of the research fields. The school also approves the research fields of students when granting rights to study.

The education is planned so as to allow students to earn the doctoral degree within the normative duration of study, which for full-time students is four years. The time in which to pass a licentiate degree is two full time study years.

The education leading to a degree may be organised in collaboration with one or more Aalto schools or with other Finnish or foreign universities.

The objectives of the doctoral programmes are described in the curricula of the doctoral programmes.

3. Supervising professor and thesis advisor

The school appoints a supervising professor who represents the research field approved for the student. 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. A supervising professor needs to be appointed to every student who is pursuing her/his studies.

The school may also appoint a co-supervisor for the student, in cases where the degree is completed in international or national joint supervision or if the degree requires shared responsibility because of its interdisciplinary nature. The co-supervisor may be a professor from Aalto University or from another Finnish or foreign university.

The school appoints one or several persons with expertise in the subject area of the doctoral thesis to act as thesis advisors. The supervising professor and/or co-supervisor may also act as the thesis advisor.

Field of business:
Thesis advisors must hold a doctoral degree.

Field of arts and field of technology, architecture:
At least one of the thesis advisors must hold a doctoral degree. If the doctoral thesis includes art productions or product development projects, at least one of the thesis advisors must have sufficient artistic qualifications and in-depth knowledge of the topic.

Field of technology:
Thesis advisors must hold a doctoral degree.

4. Study planning and supervision

Each doctoral student makes a doctoral personal study plan (DPSP) including a plan concerning the content, scope and duration of studies with credits, a research plan and a supervision plan, a financing plan and a career plan. The implementation of the doctoral personal study plan including all this is followed up yearly by the supervising professor. The supervising professor is also responsible for the supervision arrangements of the doctoral student.

5. Doctoral studies

Doctoral studies include in addition to the doctoral thesis preparation also studies with credit points. They are completed in the form of study modules.

The scope of doctoral studies with credits is as follows:

Field of business: 60 credits and
Field of arts and design and field of technology: 40 credits (AAC 19 May 2020)

The school approves the doctoral personal study plan (DPSP) of the doctoral student.

The school may, as necessary, require that students admitted to doctoral education also complete other studies.

Doctoral studies consist of two types of doctoral studies with credits in addition to the doctoral thesis (without credits). Doctoral studies are organized in study modules called “General research studies” and “Research field studies” and “Doctoral Thesis”. Sizes of the study modules with credits are described in the curricula of the doctoral programmes prepared by the doctoral programme committees.

General research studies prepare students for research work, the application of research results, the dissemination of research findings and to learn the principles of responsible conduct of research. General research studies can include transferrable skill studies.

Research field studies and doctoral thesis help students to gain comprehensive and in-depth knowledge of their research field. Doctoral studies can include studies from several Aalto doctoral programmes when agreed on in the doctoral personal study plan of the student (DPSP).
6. Requisite components of the licentiate degree

To earn the licentiate degree, students shall:

1. complete the doctoral studies with credits specified in item 5 above in accordance with the doctoral personal study plan and
2. write a licentiate thesis.

7. Licentiate thesis

The licentiate thesis is written on a topic related to the research field approved for the student.

In a licentiate thesis, the student shall demonstrate good conversance with the field of research and the capability of independently and critically applying scientific research methods. As a licentiate thesis may also be approved a number of scientific publications or manuscripts vetted for publication deemed sufficient by the university which deal with the same set of problems and a paper summarising the findings or some other work which meets corresponding scientific criteria. The publications man include co-authored publications if the author's independent contribution to them can be demonstrated.

A licentiate thesis is a public document and as such, it shall be kept available electronically at the university.

8. Examination and approval of the licentiate thesis

The licentiate thesis is presented at the school. For the thesis to be examined, the student shall submit it and an application for its examination to the school. The application for examination must be approved by the supervising professor. The school appoints one or two examiners for the licentiate thesis and obtains statements from all of them. The student is provided with an opportunity to reply to the statements. (OOS 29§) After this, the school decides on the approval of the thesis.

Without reasonable grounds, the examination of a licentiate thesis shall not take more than two months from the date of the appointment of the examiners.

9. Requisite components of the doctoral degree

To earn a doctoral degree, students shall:

1. complete the doctoral studies specified in item 5 above in accordance with the personal doctoral study plan, or have passed appropriate the appropriate licentiate studies approved by the school
2. demonstrate independent and critical thinking in relation to their field of research, as well as
3. write a doctoral thesis and defend it in public.

10. Doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis is written on a topic related to the research field approved for the student. The doctoral thesis shall contribute to new scientific knowledge.

A separate decision will be made regarding the formats and requirements of the doctoral thesis. (AAC 1 December 2015)

A doctoral thesis is a public document, which shall be available electronically at the university.

11. Preliminary examination and granting permission for public defence

In order to obtain permission for public defence, the doctoral student shall submit the manuscript of the doctoral thesis and the request for permission for public defence to the school. The request for permission must be approved by the supervising professor.

Upon receipt of the manuscript and the request for permission, the school shall decide on submitting the manuscript for preliminary examination and appoint at least two preliminary examiners for it. The preliminary examiners must hold a doctoral degree. In the field of arts, it is possible to appoint a third preliminary examiner who, instead of holding a doctoral degree, has sufficient artistic qualifications. The doctoral student is provided with an opportunity to comment on the choice of the preliminary examiners. (OOS section 29)

The school may decide not to submit the manuscript for preliminary examination if it finds that the manuscript has major flaws and/or it fails to meet the general formal requirements set for the doctoral thesis of the university. (AAC 1 December 2015)

The school obtains and processes the statements of the preliminary examiners regarding the manuscript of the doctoral thesis. The doctoral student is provided with an opportunity to reply to the statements of the preliminary examiners. (OOS section 29)

The school decides on granting permission for public defence upon receipt of the statements of the preliminary examiners.

Without special reasons, the entire processing of the manuscript shall not take more than three months from the date of appointment of the preliminary examiners.

Once the student has been granted permission for the public defence, he or she submits the doctoral thesis for publication and agrees with the school on arrangements for its public examination in a decent time or the permission abates.
12. Public examination of the doctoral thesis

The doctoral thesis shall be examined and defended at a public examination for which the school determines the date and language and appoints a custos to supervise the examination and one or two opponents. The doctoral student is provided with an opportunity to comment on the choice of the opponent(s).

The work or works constituting the doctoral thesis shall be electronically available for examination at the university for a minimum of ten days before the public examination. The book can also be on display at school.

The university may issue further provisions on the arrangements and proceedings of the public examination.

13. Approval of the doctoral thesis

Within two weeks of the public examination, the (two) opponent(s) appointed by the school shall, either individually or jointly, submit to the school a written statement concerning the doctoral thesis and its defence. Any written comments announced as forthcoming at the public examination of the doctoral thesis shall be submitted to the school within two weeks of the examination.

A demand for rejecting the doctoral thesis must be made in writing and reasons for rejecting it must be included. A demand for rejecting the doctoral thesis may be made by the opponent or by a member of the doctoral programme committee who is entitled to take part in decision-making concerning the study attainment in question.

The written statements of the opponents and other written comments shall be submitted to the school for use in the approval of the doctoral thesis. The doctoral thesis author shall be given an opportunity to reply to these statements and comments and other documents related to the evaluation in writing within a time determined by the school. (OOS section 29)

After this, the school decides on the approval of the doctoral thesis.

14. Evaluation and grading

Licentiate and doctoral theses are graded on the following scale:

**Field of business and technology:**
Licentiate theses and doctoral theses are evaluated on a scale of Pass/Fail.

**Field of arts and field of technology, architecture:**
Doctoral theses are evaluated on a scale of Pass with Distinction/Pass/Fail.
Licentiate theses are evaluated on a scale of Pass with Distinction/Pass/Fail (architecture).

No overall grades are assigned for individual study modules.

15. Entry into force

These regulations enter into force on 1 August 2018.

16. Transitional provisions

The grading scale specified in the prior regulations on licentiate and doctoral degrees shall apply to theses submitted for examination prior to 1 August 2018.

(AAC 19 May 2020) The amendment to Section 5 shall enter into force on 1 August 2020.

Students who have started their studies before 1 August 2020 may by application move to study according to the new degree structure. Doctoral personal study plan for new structure must be confirmed by applying by the School. Doctoral degree according to degree structure prior to 1 August 2020 can be completed until 31 December 2023.

Changes in sections 1-13 will entry into force on 1 August 2021.