

## **Guidelines 2/2015: Thesis defense**

Effective as of October 1, 2016.

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From AY 2016/2017, the thesis defense becomes the only part of the final exam. A well-organized defense is the key for maintaining reputation of our programs. The following guidelines describe the details of a thesis defense.

### **Thesis writing**

There is no change to existing procedures. If you are interested in reviewing all the rules from a student's perspective, visit the respective course webpage and read the attached documents:

- JEB001 Bachelor's Thesis Seminar I (at SIS),
- JEM001 Master's Thesis Seminar I (at SIS).

### **Thesis seminars**

In thesis seminars, students are informed that a thesis defense requires:

- giving a presentation of their work (15 minutes maximum) using standard presentation software (PDF or PowerPoint), and
- submitting a handout that summarizes their work (one A4 page, 3 copies).

### **Thesis reports**

When writing reports, advisors and referees are asked to be as impartial as possible. When not sure about grading, closely follow the explanations of evaluation criteria in the template.

### **Committees**

Each committee consists of three members. The committee makes a decision by simple majority voting. The Program Director is a member who attends parallel sessions and asks questions, but does not vote.

### **Before the exam**

About two weeks before the exam, each committee member becomes a rapporteur for a few selected submitted theses.

- A rapporteur is never a thesis advisor or referee.
- Ideally, the rapporteur's fields of expertise are similar to the thesis topic.
- The theses are distributed among all committee members equally.

- Assignment of theses among committee members is made by agreement of the Director and Program Director.

Each rapporteur is asked to make the following steps in advance:

- Look into the thesis.
- Read all reports carefully.
- Prepare questions.
- When reports are inconsistent, inconclusive, or poor, discuss the case with other committee members in advance.
- If reports are insufficient, ask the Program Director to arrange other reports.

### **Committee membership**

- Participation: All internal faculty members will be involved in the committees as rapporteurs. Wide participation in the committees adds diversity and also helps to align the expectations of faculty members by observing representative samples of students.
- For Bachelor's (undergraduate) committees, the Program Director typically appoints junior faculty members, faculty members with more exposure to the Bachelor's program, and those with an established track record of Bachelor's theses supervision.
- For Master's (graduate) committees, the Program Director typically appoints senior faculty members, faculty members with more exposure to the Master's program, and those with an established track record of Master's theses supervision.

### **Defense**

- Each student is given a maximum 15 minutes for his or her presentation. The student will not be interrupted during his or her talk.
- Questions take about 10-30 minutes.
- The committee members are allowed to ask specific questions from courses related to the thesis topic or methodology.
- Each committee is reserved a single room (typically Rooms 109, 206, 314).
- The defense is an event open to the public, but the public does not take part in the exam in any way.

### **Award for Distinction**

- Each committee may identify the best theses that deserve extra accolades.
- The award of Distinction is given to the approximate top 10% of defended theses.

### **Announcements**

- A brief public ceremony takes place in Room 109 in the afternoon.

- The Program Director will announce the theses receiving Distinction.
- Committee members are invited to take part, but participation is not compulsory.
- Additionally, the Program Director announces each student's grade in private.

### **Other consequences**

- Note that the thesis topic and the grade are written on the student's diploma.
- Theses with Distinction are announced on our homepage.
- The Bachelor's defense grade no longer has any consequences for admission to the Master's program.

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