

Speech for conferment dinner for doctoral degrees in technology
Ilkka Niemelä, 12 June 2026

Distinguished Honorary doctors, jubilee doctors, new doctors, Fellow Aaltonians and friends of Aalto,

Dear Dr. Einola,

The conferral of doctoral degrees is a tremendous milestone. Marking the close of a long journey, it gives us all the opportunity to look back and appreciate the hard work done.

You, our newly minted doctors, and your loved ones, should be very proud of your accomplishment.

As Dr. Einola pointed out, doctoral work is about crossing borders. Each doctor has endured the same rigorous process. It pushes and tests you, and stretches your own understanding of the world, as well as the boundaries of what is known.

It is a process that, of course, the other doctors being honoured today have also gone through as part of their extraordinary achievements. We indeed share a common goal to deeply understand the world and a duty to make it a better place.

Hyvät kuulijat

Yhteiskunnassamme on koettu vaikeita aikoja viime vuosina eikä taloutemme ole kasvanut, mutta on tärkeää muistaa, että kaikki ei ole pelkästään synkkää: Tietyt alat, kuten tekoäly, kvantti- ja avaruusteknologia, kasvavat Suomessa voimakkaasti. Samaa kasvun ja uudistumisen henkeä tarvitaan kaikilla toimialoilla.

Our newly minted doctors play a crucial role in creating the cutting-edge understanding we need to create and renew industries. The challenges society faces require sharp analytical skills, systematic thinking and the ability to take on new perspectives – all of which you have honed during your doctoral degree.

Erilaisten ihmisten ja näkökulmien saattaminen yhteen on Aalto-yliopiston toiminnan ytimessä. Toivon, että olet voinut tohtoripolkusi aikana työskennellä monien eri aloja edustavien ihmisten kanssa. Vaikka tutkintosi on nyt suoritettu, yhteistyömahdollisuudet jatkuvat.

Dear new doctors

While your degree is now complete, whether you are pursuing a career in academia, industry or as an entrepreneur, I hope you will continue to engage with your alma mater – please do join us for events and happenings in your field, or in one of the many other ways we can collaborate.

Where ever life takes you, remember that you are now and will always be an Aaltonian. As alumni, you remain an important part of our community – you are always welcome here.

But today, as we celebrate your doctoral degree, I want to congratulate you on all your hard work and great accomplishments

And I would like to leave you with a thought which I have found very important when navigating in life.

And this is the power of Curiosity and here I quote Tove Jansson, a famous Finnish author:

"It is simply this: do not tire, never lose interest, never grow indifferent—lose your invaluable curiosity and you let yourself die. It's as simple as that."

Dear newly minted doctors, honorary doctors and Jubilee doctors

My warmest congratulations once again.

Lämpimät onnittelut kaikille tänään provovoiduille tohtoreille!

Have a lovely evening, everyone. Hauskaa iltaa kaikille!