ELEC guidelines for supervising professors regarding pre-examination and defence

This is a brief checklist especially tailored for new professors.

For your student, you can advertise the following page as a good starting point for ELEC-specific guidelines of the pre-examination and graduation process: https://www.aalto.fi/en/programmes/aalto-doctoral-programme-in-electrical-engineering/doctoral-thesis#4-stepwise-instructions-for-finalising-the-doctoral-thesis

Before pre-examination:

- Evaluate the thesis manuscript – is it ready for pre-examination?
    - ELEC thesis requirements
    - NOTE: after pre-examination only changes required by the pre-examiners and DPC, and correction of minor spelling mistakes etc. are allowed. For example, title change is not allowed afterwards.
- Propose two independent pre-examiners
- Confirm the content of student's study credit plan (if not confirmed earlier), currently done via email (student initiates the process –> Supervising professor –> ELEC Study Coordinator)
- More information via the links below:
    - Instructions for the whole pre-examination process
    - Instructions sent for the pre-examiners

➔ Pre-examiners nominated by the DPC, Pre-examination begins

- Pre-examiners have 4 weeks to give their statements

When the pre-examination statements arrive:

- Discuss with the student the revisions required, but wait for the DPC to decide on the continuation of the process
- DPC gives their first decision:
    - A: Permission granted
    - B: Corrections required within 6 weeks, DPC Chair checks them within one week
    - C: Corrections required within 3 months, submission schedule follows the DPC meeting and email meeting schedule
    - D: Corrections required, sent also to the pre-examiners – a longer process with several administrative steps
- Student makes corrections and submits them according to the schedules presented above
    - Your approval of corrections is required
    - NOTE: after the C decision, if the corrections are submitted to a regular (live) meeting of the committee, it's possible to propose also the opponent and defence date in the same meeting
- More information via the links below:
    - Permission process scheme
    - Decision types and guidelines for corrections

➔ Permission granted by the DPC

- The defence should be arranged within 2 months
- No (major) changes to the thesis are allowed

Proposing opponent + defence date

- 1-2 opponents, pre-examiner can act as the only opponent
- Unigrafia's publishing schedule determines the shortest time frame between the decision of the DPC and the defence date: currently 24 days are required. In need of shorter time frames, please consult the ELEC study coordinator.
- Customarily the defence begins at 12 noon sharp, which means that the audience enters the hall by 12 noon, but the thesis defender, opponent and custos enter at 12:15 sharp.
- Propose opponent
- Application guidelines for the defence, opponent and custos
- Applications processed both in regular and email meetings of the DPC every week (except during holidays)
    - DL on Mondays at 12
    - Decisions announced on Friday of the same week.

➔ Opponent and custos nominated, and defence date, time and language confirmed by the DPC

- NOTE: if changes are needed for these details, you need to inform the study coordinator (and DPC) immediately. A new decision of the DPC is required if the opponent changes, and new decision of the DPC Chair if any other of the confirmed details changes. **Only the venue can be changed without a new decision** but remember to inform the ELEC study coordinator about that change as well.

Defence day arrangements

What happens on the defence day and day before?

- Dinner with the opponent on the previous day (optional, depending on opponent's schedule):
    - Custos, opponent and thesis defender
    - Get to know each other and go through the arrangements and proceedings, but no discussion about the thesis or examination
    - If not arranged, these can be discussed during lunch
    - Note: The dinner is not included in the dissertation costs covered by the department.
- The defence day typically includes:
    - Lunch with the opponent, custos and thesis defender (see also dinner)
    - Defence
    - Coffee (if student offers)
    - Post-doctoral party (if student arranges)

Responsibilities:

- You as a custos are responsible for hosting the opponent. Please check all the responsibilities of the custos regarding the defence.
- The student is not allowed to be in contact with the opponent in advance in any way, except for sending the thesis pdf (and perhaps briefly inviting them to the post-doctoral party)

Department's role

- The defence costs of the department cover, among other things, opponent's travels (economy class) and accommodation (2-3 nights depending on the travel time); defence lunch; costume rental for the opponent (if needed); sending the printed version of the thesis to the opponent before the day of defence (if needed).

- Once the opponent is nominated and the defence confirmed, the assistant services of ELEC (assistants-elec@aalto.fi) will contact the thesis defender regarding defence practicalities, and the opponent regarding booking travels and accommodation. They also arrange the defence lunch and help with other room reservations, if needed.
- If the schedule is tight, you can ask for advice already before the defence is confirmed.
- NOTE: Please do not make any arrangements with the opponent that are out of the ordinary before consulting financial services. If you are unsure what is considered as ordinary, please check that from assistants-elec@aalto.fi.

Dresscode and proceedings at the defence

- Dresscode for the day
- If you need to contact costume rental services, e.g. to rent a tailcoat for the opponent, please contact the assistant services of ELEC (assistants-elec@aalto.fi)
- Doctoral hat is not compulsory for the custos and opponent
    - Custos can use doctoral hat only if they have acquired permission to use it after graduating from Aalto University (or other university). You can borrow a hat of a colleague only if you have graduated from the same university and acquired permission to use the doctoral hat.
    - The opponent can use the doctoral hat of their home university. They can also wear the ceremonial gown of their home university.
- Protocol in a nutshell
- See also **appendix** at the end of this document for more detailed protocol.
- The defence usually lasts 2–3 hours, but no more than 4 hours. The custos announces if a break will be taken. The custos also ensures that there are no interruptions and disturbances during the defence. If disturbances occur, the custos may ask the persons involved to leave.
- Prepare to report the proceedings of the defence with a Custos report. Reporting is recommended by TENK and UNIFI. Deliver the report after the defence (preferably as a pdf via email) to the ELEC study coordinator.

After defence:

- TIP: ask the opponent(s) to write their statement right after the defence
- Check that the statement includes something about the defence itself and the separate **evaluation table** (ELEC guidelines for opponents).
- Deliver the statement (preferably as a pdf via email) to the ELEC study coordinator. Deliver also the **report of custos**.
- The theses are approved on regular meetings. If the statement arrives even a couple of days before the meeting, the thesis can be evaluated if the student approves the statement and confirms they will not make an official response regarding the statement.

➔ Approval of the thesis by the DPC

- Student will graduate on the next possible graduation date if they have applied for graduation in Sisu.

Appendix: Protocol and lines in ELEC defences

1. Opening of the examination

(Arrival, see website). When everyone has taken their place, the custos shall welcome everyone, introduce the thesis defender and the opponent(s) and declare the proceedings open:

At this defence, the doctoral thesis of _____, Master of Science (in Technology), will be presented for examination for the degree of Doctor of Science. Professor/Doctor _____ of the _____ (university) will act as the official opponent. As the official Custos appointed by the Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering, I declare this defence open.

2. Lectio praecursoria

The doctoral student shall stand to deliver the lectio praecursoria, which shall last a maximum of twenty minutes. There are **ELEC guidelines for the lectio** available.

The opening phrase is ***"Honoured Custos, honoured opponents, esteemed audience".***

After the lectio praecursoria the doctoral student, still standing, shall say in the language of the defence:

"I ask you, honoured professor (/doctor) _____ appointed as opponent by Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering to present the observations that you consider appropriate for this doctoral thesis".

3. Opponent's opening statement, examination and closing statement

"--------", see website for more information.

4. Additional opponents

The doctoral student, remaining standing, thanks the opponent and then the opponent sits down. The doctoral student turns to the audience and says:

"Esteemed audience, I ask those of you who have observations to make on the doctoral thesis here presented to kindly request the floor from the custos."

Traditionally, the opportunity to ask questions is reserved only for **official observations**. If such exist, custos makes clear that observations shall be made to the department within two weeks of the defence

It is advisable that the custos makes clear at the defence that anyone besides the opponent(s) who intend(s) to make an official observation about the doctoral thesis shall give notice of this intention at the defence, otherwise that person loses the right to make such an observation.

5. Conclusion of the examination

The custos shall ***present the thanks of the Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering to the opponent(s).***

The custos shall close the defence by standing and saying, ***"I declare this public examination closed***".

The protagonists leave the hall in the same order as they entered, first the doctoral student, then the custos and finally the opponent(s).