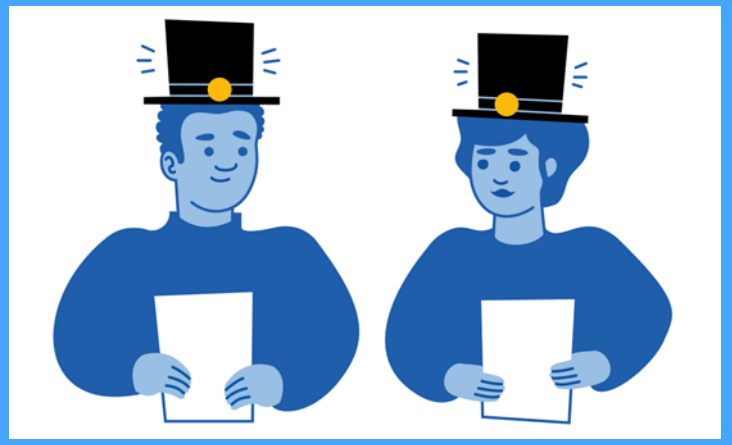
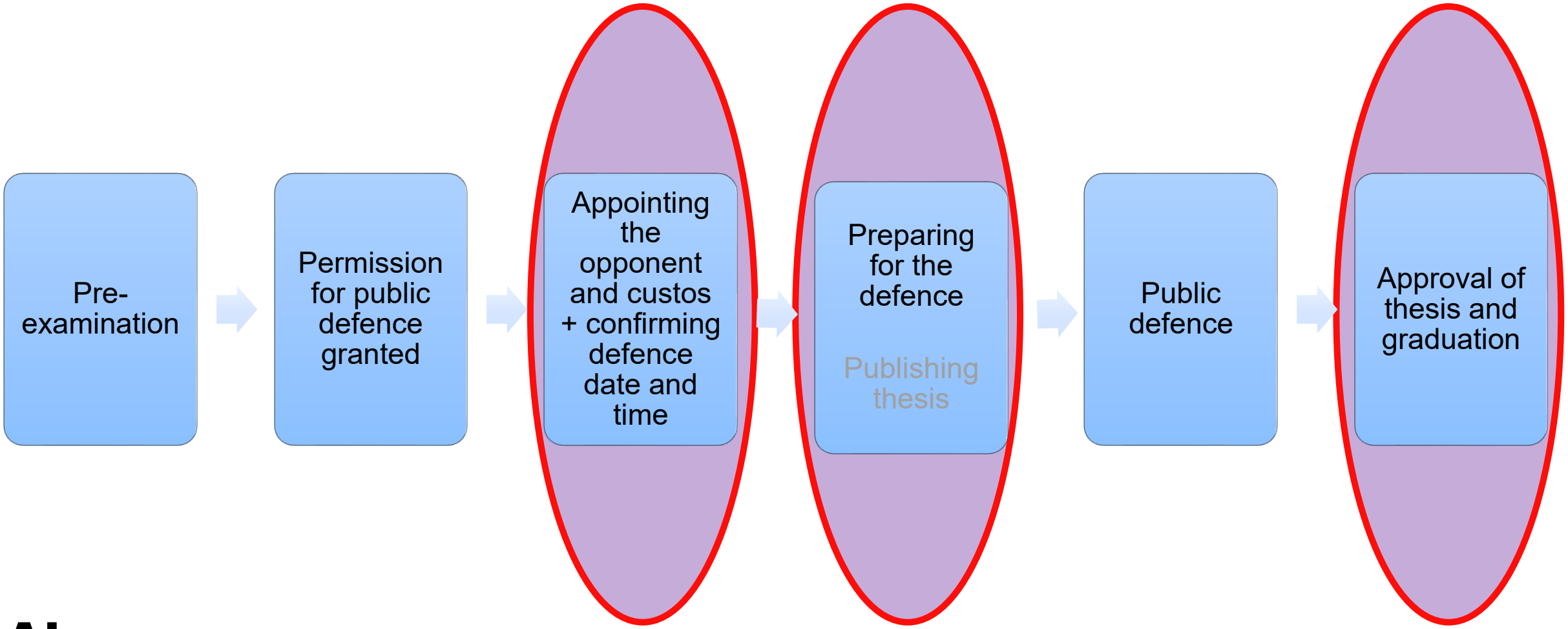
Aalto-yliopisto
Aalto-universitetet
Aalto University

Preparing for public defence and graduation



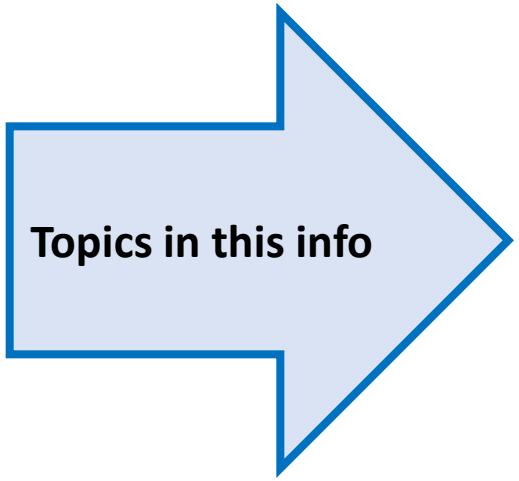
Suvipilvi Kotipelto 5.11.2026

Process overview



A!

From pre-examination to graduation – overview



- Doctoral student applies for pre-examination (Webropol)
- Doctoral Programme Committee (DPC) appoints the pre-examiners and sends the doctoral thesis to pre-examination
- Doctoral student receives the statements and reacts accordingly
- DPC decides about granting the permission for defence, **appoints the opponent & custos**
- **Doctoral student prepares for the public defence**
  - Prepares their manuscript for printing (Unigrafia's publication ordering system)
  - **Takes care of the arrangements for the public defence**
  - **Shares information about their thesis & defence**
  - **Defends their thesis**
- **DPC approves the thesis based on the opponent's statement**
- **Doctoral student applies for graduation in Sisu & graduates**

More information about What happens during the process?

EN:
https://www.aalto.fi/en/doctoral-education/evaluation-and-graduation

FI:
https://www.aalto.fi/fi/tohtorinkoulutus/arviointi-ja-valmistuminen

Evaluation and graduation –

- Finalising your thesis manuscript
- Pre-examination
- Preparing for the public defence
- Publishing your doctoral thesis
- Defence day
- Graduation

Doctoral education / Evaluation and graduation

Evaluation and graduation

This information is for all Aalto doctoral students who are at the final phase of their studies. You can find comprehensive guidance on how to successfully complete your thesis and degree and how to prepare for the defence, including the pre-examination.



Two doctors with their hats

Preparing for pre-examination, to publish your doctoral thesis and organise the public defence

How to confirm the details for your defence, opponent(s) and custos?

1) Permission for defence granted
2) DPC to approve the details of your defence*, opponent(s) and the custos (at the latest 5 weeks before the public defence)
   - The printing order through Unigrafia needs to be made at least 24 days before the public defence
   - Note: if the thesis is published through ARTS Theses or has been done jointly with an international partner (Cotutelle), reserve even more time between getting the decision from DPC and the defence date.

*Details of the defence: language, date and time (also mode/location needed)

- **Opponent proposal form (307)** is available at Doctoral student forms (aalto.fi). Both the supervising professor and the doctoral student sign it and the doctoral student submits it to their Doctoral programme's Doctoral education services with the proposed opponent(s)' CV and publication list.

Note

- Date and time: must be suitable for the proposed opponent and custos, and there must be suitable lecture hall available.
  - Typically, the public defences are held on Fridays at 12 and takes about 2-3 hours.
  - The time given in the form 307 refers to the time when audience must enter the hall. The thesis defender, opponent and custos enter 15 minutes later.
- Changes to appointed persons, language or the date/time
  - are decided by the Chair of the DPC or the DPC
  - Errata page might be needed for your thesis.
  - Make sure changes will not be necessary – but if they are, contact your Doctoral programme's Doctoral education services ASAP!
- Plan the defence mode (and location) well in advance!

EN:
https://www.aalto.fi/en/doctoral-education/preparing-for-the-public-defence

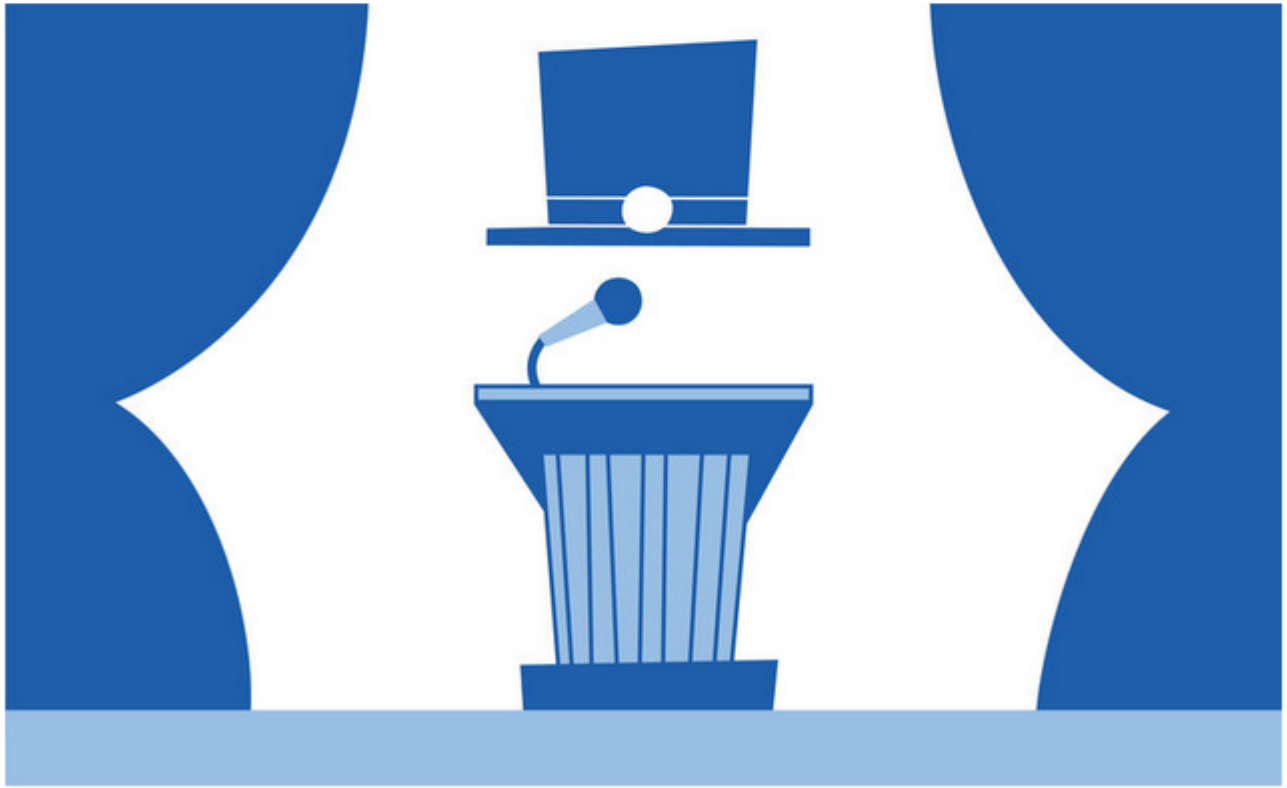
FI:
https://www.aalto.fi/fi/tohtorinkoulutus/vaitostilaisuuden-jarjestaminen

Doctoral education / Preparing for the public defence

Preparing for the public defence

During the public examination of the doctoral thesis, or the defence, the doctoral student defends the results of their doctoral thesis and answers questions presented by the opponent, who has been appointed to evaluate the thesis. The course of the public defence is supervised by a custos, who usually is the supervising professor of the doctoral student. The public defence is also a ceremonial occasion that follows the academic traditions of each field.

On this page you can find Aalto University's instructions for arranging public defences.



Place/mode of the defence

The public defence can take place

1) at the premises of Aalto University
2) remotely over an **interactive** online platform such as Zoom or Teams
3) in hybrid form (both on campus & interactively online)

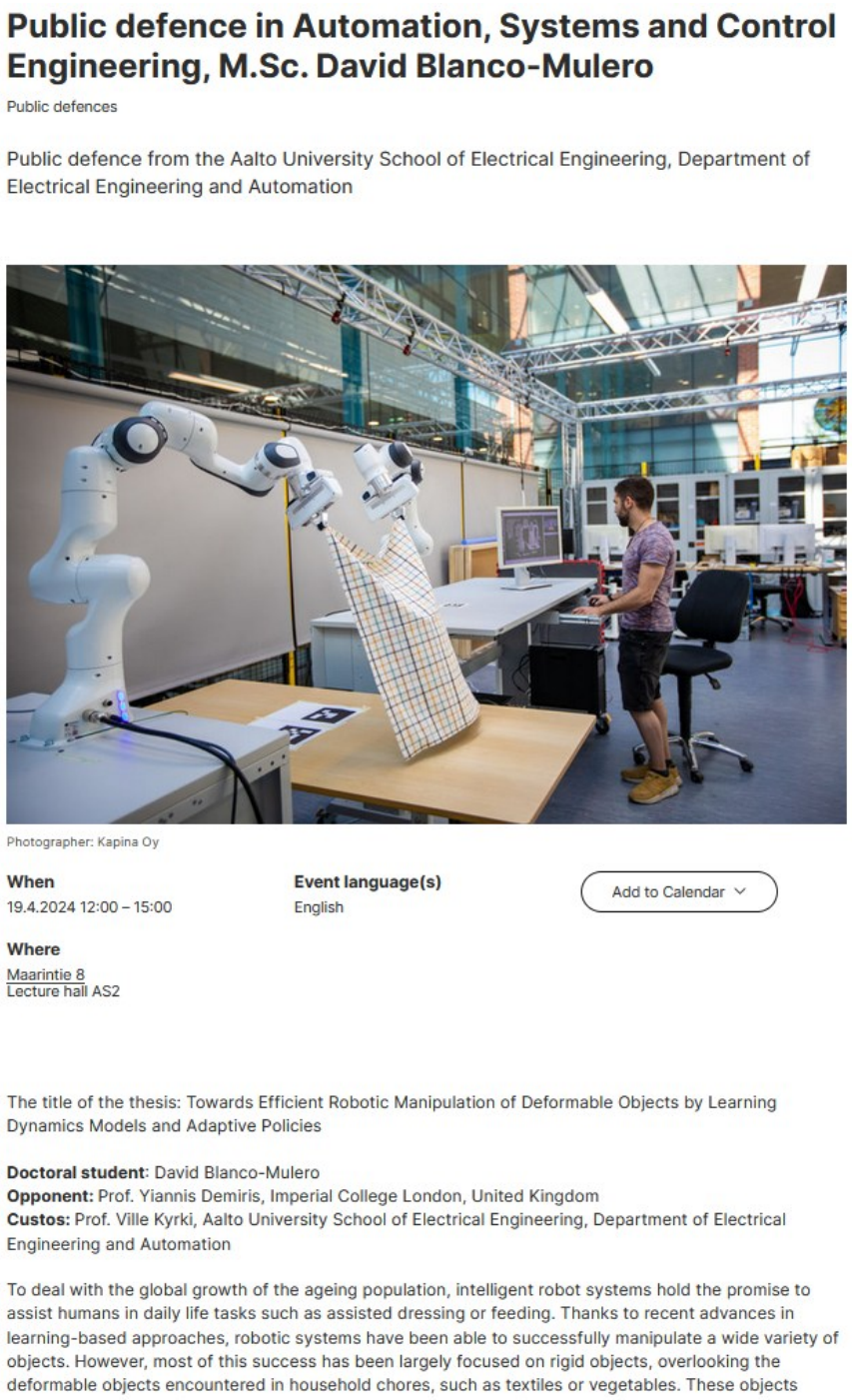
- IT Services offer support for online/hybrid defences, contact them several days in advance.
- Arrange for someone to monitor your Zoom during the defence.
- Send the Zoom link to your Doctoral programme as soon as possible (at the latest 15 days before)
- Check the cyber security instructions for the event

Practical arrangements

- Book a lecture hall and preparation space
- Practice the use of AV equipment in the lecture hall in advance (lobby services can help out)
- Make a plan with custos for how to proceed in case of technical issues
- Check your School's defence protocol / proceedings & dress code (Proceedings of the public defence day)
- You can invite personal guests to the public defence such as persons related to the field, pre-examiners, advisors, and family members.
- Venue signs: Depending on the building, you can either send an A4-sized notice of the defence (Defence of XX XX, date, place) to the lobby services of the building, who will display it outside the hall where the defence will take place; or alternatively, send the same information to be placed on the video screens of the building (Ekonominaukio 1).
- Costs: Department covers opponent costs (fee, travel, accommodation), doctoral student usually covers the possible refreshments for audience and Post-doctoral party "karonkka"

Public defence announcement

- a concise, plain-language description of the thesis, aimed at the general public and media
- Finnish, English (and in Swedish)
- Submit your announcement text and defence details at least **15 days before** the defence via Webropol form.
- Your School creates an event of your public defence at aalto.fi website under Events. Your annoucement text will be included.
- Check instructions for writing a good public defence announcement.



Public defence in Automation, Systems and Control Engineering, M.Sc. David Blanco-Mulero

Public defences

Public defence from the Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering, Department of Electrical Engineering and Automation

Photographer: Kapina Oy

When
19.4.2024 12:00 – 15:00

Event language(s)
English

Add to Calendar

Where
Maarintie 8
Lecture hall AS2

The title of the thesis: Towards Efficient Robotic Manipulation of Deformable Objects by Learning Dynamics Models and Adaptive Policies

Doctoral student: David Blanco-Mulero
Opponent: Prof. Yiannis Demiris, Imperial College London, United Kingdom
Custos: Prof. Ville Kyrki, Aalto University School of Electrical Engineering, Department of Electrical Engineering and Automation

To deal with the global growth of the ageing population, intelligent robot systems hold the promise to assist humans in daily life tasks such as assisted dressing or feeding. Thanks to recent advances in learning-based approaches, robotic systems have been able to successfully manipulate a wide variety of objects. However, most of this success has been largely focused on rigid objects, overlooking the deformable objects encountered in household chores, such as textiles or vegetables. These objects

EN:
https://www.aalto.fi/en/doctoral-education/proceedings-of-the-public-defence-day

FI:
https://www.aalto.fi/fi/tohtorinkoulutus/vaitospaivan-kulku



Public display of the thesis & distribution

- Online display for 7 days before the defence
- In case of article thesis, both the summary and the published and unpublished articles are publicly accessible online.
- Link to the online display of the thesis is included in the public defence announcement. Both must be available to public for at least 7 days before the defence.
- Your doctoral thesis will also be published with your permission in Aaltodoc publication archive (separately from the public display prior to the defence).
- Each School requires you to hand in a specific number of copies of your printed thesis for the use of the School. See how your printed thesis is to be distributed and how many copies are required: Distribution of thesis
- Please note that it is the doctoral student's responsibility to send the thesis pdf to the opponent before the public defence!

Lectio praecursoria

- Lectio is a **20-minute** introductory lecture on your thesis topic
  - In the *lectio praecursoria*, introductory lecture, the doctoral student should explain to the audience what new or interesting the thesis has to offer and how it is connected to the field of study and to the society in general. The lectio might, for example, present the research area and the research work, explain the research questions and the method used and the results.
- The lectio praecursoria is given in the language of the public defence. If the doctoral student wishes, the lectio can be given in Finnish or in Swedish. In this case, it is courteous to inform the opponent, who does not speak Finnish or Swedish, of its contents.

Approval of thesis & Graduation

- DPC decides on the approval of your thesis based on the statement of the opponent.
  - Doctoral theses are graded either pass or fail.
  - **ARTS:** Doctoral theses at the School of Arts, Design and Architecture are graded pass with distinction, pass or fail.
- Remember to request your graduation in Sisu.
- You can already apply for graduation is Sisu after your defence date has been confirmed by DPC (and your credit plan is approved in Sisu).
  - Update your contact information in Sisu; remember to add your valid contact information to alumni info and please give us permission to contact you - if we need help for finding alumni
- Graduation takes place on official graduation dates (once a month), after DPC has approved your thesis.

Remember

- Before graduation, please update your contact information (especially your personal email address) in **Sisu** for further contacts regarding the degree certificate, graduation ceremony, ceremonial conferment, thesis awards, etc.
- Before graduation, please fill in the "Consent for Contact After Graduation" form in order to receive communications from Aalto university and the Doctoral education services after graduation, namely regarding the national career monitoring survey (Aarresaari) and thesis award competitions outside of Aalto University.
  - Alternatively, you can send the same information by email to your Doctoral programme's Doctoral Education Services.
- Answer the feedback survey for doctoral graduates (see results from 2025 survey)
- 3 years after graduation: a national career monitoring survey
- Aalto university incentive scholarships: Exact conditions and instructions to apply for the incentive scholarships (aalto.fi)

Questions?

- Your doctoral programme's Doctoral education services team members, contact information: Doctoral education services | Aalto University
- General questions/comments or if you don't know who to ask: doctoralservices@aalto.fi

Thank you for interest and comments – and good luck!