



Information sheet for PhD Committee Chairs: PhD exam procedure

The rules for the examination of PhDs are set in the Promotionsverordnung and the Promotionsordnung (Parts A and B). All of these documents contain essential information, and it is your responsibility as chair of a PhD committee or a supervisor to read and understand them. These notes aim to clarify the procedure, and make clear roles, responsibilities and tasks, as well as setting out a typical timetable. In cases where you are unsure, you should contact the Graduate School (graduateschool@geo.uzh.ch) well in advance, and we will be glad to offer you advice.

Please note that these rules may be different to those you are familiar with from other universities or graduate schools.

[Promotionsverordnung](#)

Currently valid version of the ordinance only available in German

[Minor updates to the regulations](#)

Most be read in conjunction with the document above.

[Part A of the PhD regulations](#)

Note that the German version is binding, English is for information only.

[Part B of the PhD regulations](#)

specific to the Graduate School of Geography and Earth System Science

Schematic Timetable and Checklist for a PhD exam

	Who	Description	Actions	Timing
1	Chair of the PhD Committee	Make initial contact with reviewer and Graduate School to form circulation committee	Contact external reviewer and set out timetable and expected content of review Contact Graduate School and form Circulation Committee Invite members of Circulation Committee	At least 3 months before the planned PhD Exam
2	PhD Candidate in discussion with Chair of the PhD Committee	Completion of all milestones in Student Admin (especially any extra requirements (Auflagen), teaching (100-420 hours) and course requirement (12 ECTS)	Submit documentation and complete milestones in Student Admin	Can be completed as soon as milestones are fulfilled. Must be done before PhD can be submitted



3	PhD Candidate in discussion with Chair of the PhD Committee	Submission of the PhD thesis and registration for the PhD Exam with the Faculty	Information submitted to the Faculty as detailed online (including planned date and all required documents) Submission of thesis to the Faculty	8 weeks before the planned PhD Exam
4	PhD Committee	Decision as to recommendation for a distinction	If the PhD committee wishes to propose a distinction then at least two external reviewers are required. Therefore, this must be decided on submission.	Before PhD is submitted
5	Chair of the PhD Committee	Formal invitation to external reviewer(s)	Invite external reviewer to prepare review, with guidelines on expected form of review and due date Send hard copy or electronic version of the thesis if requested	As soon as PhD is submitted (3) successfully completed
6	Chair of the PhD Committee and Main Supervisor	Internal reviews – note that if the main supervisor and Chair of the PhD Committee are different people they must both prepare reviews.	Chair of the PhD Committee and Main Supervisor prepare reviews	As soon as PhD is submitted (3) successfully completed
7	Chair of the PhD Committee	Faculty informed of Circulation Committee members, date, time and location of PhD Exam. Check that sufficient Faculty Members can attend the exam.	Must be filled out in Student Admin tool Room booked for PhD exam (typically at least 4 hours to allow set-up and completion of formalities)	As soon as reviews are available and not less than 4 weeks before the planned PhD Exam
8	First named member in the Circulation	Circulation Committee plan meeting	Organises a date to discuss the thesis	As soon as reviews are available (N.B.



	Committee (Chair Circulation Committee)			the meeting can be organised earlier, but cannot be held before reviews are available)
9	Chair of the PhD Committee	Announcement of PhD exam to Department over giuz@geo		4 weeks before the planned PhD exam
10	Circulation Committee	Circulation Committee meets	The thesis and reviews are discussed A short report is prepared by the Chair of the Circulation Committee and submitted to Student Admin.	Not less than one week before the planned PhD exam
11	Chair and members of the PhD Committee	Decision on issues put forward by reviewers and Circulation Committee	The PhD Committee is responsible for deciding how to deal with any issues which arise. They may choose (for example) to postpone or cancel the exam, to further investigate the issues during the exam, to propose minor changes, etc.	Before planned PhD exam
12	Chair of the PhD Committee	PhD Exam	1 hour public exam (colloquium and questions typically ½ / ½ agreed in advance) 1 hour closed exam, attended by at least three people, including two people with "Promotionsrecht", members of the Circulation Committee, the PhD Committee and, if desired, the external reviewer. Anyone with Promotionsrecht can attend.	-



			Minutes of the PhD exam completed and signed by all present Decision on the PhD exam made by the attendees of the closed part of the exam, and communicated to the candidate	
13	Chair of the PhD Committee	Submission of the final version of the thesis, original reviews and minutes of the PhD exam. This version is uploaded to Zora and is the version of record.	After any changes minuted at the exam the final version of the PhD (as will be printed) is submitted to the Faculty, together with the original reviews and minutes of PhD exam	As appropriate after the PhD exam – changes should be completed within three months
14	Faculty Studies Committee	Decision of the Faculty Studies Committee	Validation	Documents must be received at least 3 weeks in advance
15	Faculty	Decision of the Faculty	Acceptance	
16	Main Supervisor (or a representative)	Graduation	The main supervisor is invited to give a short “Laudatio” in German at the Graduation Ceremony attended by the PhD	Dates published in MNF calendar. Typically in dates in May, October and December every year.

Definitions and roles

Chair of the PhD Committee: The chair of the PhD Committee is formally responsible for the PhD, and must have “Promotionsrecht” in the MNF. This is the case for all holders of the title Professor in our faculty, and those who have explicitly applied for this status.

Main supervisor: The main supervisor is listed on the PhD as “Leiterin or Leiter”. They take the main role in day to day supervision, and if they have Promotionsrecht are also formally the Chair of the Committee. They may organise the PhD exam, but the Chair is formally responsible to the Faculty, and should communicate with the Faculty and Graduate School. At the Graduation Ceremony the main supervisor is invited to give a short “Laudatio” on the PhD (usually in German).

PhD Committee: The PhD Committee (who have regularly met with, and approved the PhD’s progress) are responsible for responding to, and deciding upon, any concerns voiced in the review of the thesis. They are also responsible for making any recommendation with respect to distinctions.



External Reviewer: An external reviewer, who was not involved in the project, is invited by the Chair to review the thesis. The Graduate School in Geography expects that this reviewer is external to UZH. If a distinction is to be recommended (typically a thesis in the top 5%) then at least two external reviews are required – the criteria for a distinction should be made clear to external examiners in their invitations. It is also important that when reviews are requested, it is made clear that candidates are given these after completion of the examination process. Officially these reviews should be anonymised. Faculty rules for conflicts of interest should be noted with respect to external reviewers.

Internal Reviews: Both the Chair of the PhD Committee and the Main Supervisor prepare a review of the thesis. If a distinction is to be recommended (typically a thesis in the top 5%) then at least two reviewers must recommend this.

Circulation committee: The Circulation Committee consists of at least two faculty members and one further member of the Department (from the “Oberer Mittelbau”) The members of the Circulation Committee are invited by the Graduate School in discussion with the Chair of the PhD Committee. They receive the thesis and reviews at least 4 weeks before the planned PhD exam, and meet to discuss any issues. They upload their short report to Student Admin at least one week before the exam.

Paper-based thesis: PhDs must detail their contribution to each paper in a paper-based thesis in the thesis. The publication status of papers must also be clear. Minimum requirement for PhDs starting after March, 2023 is 3 manuscripts, all submitted and at least one accepted.

Document history

RSP/IGR/UMB: 28.09.2014 (Initial draft)

RSP: 25.09.2017 (Minor updates)

RSP: 27.01.2022 (Updated to match Student Admin system and new distinction process)

RSP: 19.05.2022 (Update to include note on conflicts)

RSP: 03.06.2024 (Update to reflect changes to paper requirements and to process – final version now goes automatically to Zora)