

Ordinance on Doctoral Studies at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (Ordinance on Doctoral Studies ETH Zurich)

of 1 July 2008 (Version: 1 November 2013)

This English translation serves information purposes only and has no legal force.
The original German version is the legally binding document.

The Executive Board of the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich,
pursuant to Art. 3, Para.1, Lit. b of the ETHZ-ETHL Ordinance of 13 November 2003,¹
hereby decrees:

Chapter 1: General provisions

Art. 1 Scope

This ordinance sets forth the requirements, procedures and responsibilities for the awarding of doctoral degrees by the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich).

Art. 2 Doctorates

¹ETH Zurich confers:

- a. regular doctorates as proof of the graduate's ability to conduct high-level scientific research based on an independently produced original study;
- b. honorary doctorates in recognition of outstanding contributions to science.

²On request ETH Zurich provides information regarding doctoral degrees awarded.²

Art. 3 Doctoral title

¹ETH Zurich confers the title of “Doctor of Sciences (Dr. sc. ETH Zurich)”.

²Awardees of honorary doctorates receive the title “Honorary Doctor” or “Doctor honoris causa”.

Art. 4 Doctoral committee

¹Each department establishes a doctoral committee composed of at least three professors.

²“Professors” for the purposes of this ordinance are professors as defined in Art. 1(1) of the ETH Faculty Ordinance of 18 September 2003^{3,4}

³The doctoral committee is elected by the Department Conference for a term of two years. Re-election is possible.

⁴The composition of the doctoral committee must be reported to the Rector.

AS 2008 6437

¹ SR 414.110.37

² Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, effective since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

³ SR 172.220.113.40

⁴ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

Chapter 2: Regular doctorates

Section 1: Admission

Art. 5 Basic requirements

¹Admission to doctoral studies requires good scientific credentials.

²The following persons may apply for doctoral studies at ETH Zurich:

- a. Holders of one of the following:
 1. an ETH or EPFL Master's degree⁵
 2. a Swiss degree in pharmacology
 3. a Master's degree⁶ in mathematics, engineering or natural sciences from a Swiss university which meets the requirements of Art. 11(1) of the University Advancement Law of 8 October 1999,⁷ or from another university with which an agreement to this effect has been signed
- b. Holders of a university degree equivalent to an ETH Master's degree in terms of content, scope and importance
- c. Candidates enrolled in an ETH Zurich Master's degree programme⁸ who fulfil the requirements for fast-track doctoral studies as specified in the programme regulations of the department concerned
- d. Holders of a Master's degree from a university recognized by ETH Zurich in a field other than mathematics, engineering or natural sciences, but which lies within the teaching and research field of the thesis supervisor
- e. Holders of a Master's degree from a university recognized by ETH Zurich
- f. Candidates with outstanding credentials.

Art. 6 Thesis supervisor

¹To initiate the admissions procedure, the candidate must have obtained the written agreement of a faculty member to supervise the thesis.

²The supervisor may be

- a. a professor;
- b. an ETH Zurich *Titularprofessor* or *Privatdozent*, provided that both of the following apply:⁹
 - 1.¹⁰ He/she works full-time at ETH Zurich, a research institute of the ETH domain or in a joint chair with the University of Zurich.
 2. The department concerned has given its consent.

Art. 7 Admissions procedure

The admissions procedure comprises two stages:

- a. provisional admission (Art. 8–10)
- b.¹¹ final admission (Art. 12)

Art. 8 Provisional admission: Principles

⁵ Term as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369). This change has been integrated into the entire ordinance.

⁶ Term as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369). This change has been integrated into the entire ordinance.

⁷ SR 414.20

⁸ Term as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

⁹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

¹⁰ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

¹¹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

¹The candidate should register with the Rectorate.

²The Rectorate determines the supporting documents required to accompany the application. It then forwards the application, together with an evaluation by the Prorector for Doctoral Studies, to the department specified by the supervisor.

³The department's doctoral committee reviews the applications and, after consulting the supervisor, formulates the appropriate recommendations for the attention of the department.

⁴The department submits a recommendation of approval or rejection to the Rector.

⁵Candidates who fulfil the requirements stipulated under Art. 5, Para. 1 and 2, Lit. a, b, c or d are generally provisionally admitted without any further requirements.

Art. 9 Provisional admission: Procedures

¹The Prorector for Doctoral Studies may provisionally admit candidates who fulfil the requirements stipulated under Art. 5, Para. 1 and 2, Lit. a, b, c or d or Art. 6 to doctoral studies without consulting the department. This abbreviated procedure is subject to the department's approval.

²If a candidate does not, in the opinion of the Prorector for Doctoral Studies, fulfil the requirements stipulated under Art. 5, Para. 1, or if he/she comes under Art. 5, Para 2, Lit. e or f, the doctoral committee of the department concerned reviews the candidate's scientific qualifications on the basis of his/her dossier. In agreement with the supervisor, the committee proposes additional requirements to be met.

³At the department's request, the Rector sets the additional admission requirements.

Art. 10 Additional admissions requirements

¹The department specifies on an individual basis the time period within which the additional admission requirements must be met. This does not normally exceed one year.

²The Rectorate verifies whether the additional admission requirements have been met.

³If the additional admissions requirements specify examinations and these are not passed, they may, with the consent of the supervisor, be retaken once within a period of six months. If the respective examination is not offered during this period the Rector may grant an extension of the deadline at the request of the supervisor.¹²

Art. 11 Matriculation and enrolment

¹Once the complete application and supporting documents have been received, and the candidate has been judged fit by the Prorector for Doctoral Studies, he/she is provisionally matriculated.

²Following provisional admission to doctoral studies the candidate is firmly matriculated and enrolled.

Art. 11¹³ Research plan

¹Provisionally admitted candidates must draw up a research plan. It should state:

- a. the thesis objectives;
- b. the thesis concept;
- c. the doctoral candidate's duties.

²The research plan is submitted to the supervisor and, if possible, to a co-examiner.

³The supervisor submits the research plan to the doctoral committee for approval.

⁴The research plan must be submitted within twelve months of registration. Any extension to this deadline must be approved by the doctoral committee.¹⁴

¹² Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

¹³ Originally Art. 12.

¹⁴ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

Art. 12¹⁵ Advancing to full candidacy

¹Advancement to full candidacy for doctoral studies is granted when the below conditions are fulfilled:

- a. the research plan has been approved.
- b. the additional requirements specified during the admission procedure have been met.

²Candidates for the fast-track doctoral programme may only advance to final admission when they have obtained the Master's degree.

³The departments may stipulate further generally applicable admission requirements. These are subject to the approval of the Rector.

⁴At the department's request, the Rector decides on full admission to the doctorate procedure.

Section 1a:¹⁶ Matriculation and dematriculation/withdrawal

Art. 13 Matriculation and enrolment

¹Once the complete application and supporting documents have been received, and the candidate has been judged fit by the Prorector for Doctoral Studies, he/she is provisionally matriculated.

²Following provisional admission to doctoral studies the candidate is firmly matriculated and enrolled.

Art. 13a Multiple matriculation

¹Simultaneous matriculation at the doctorate level at more than one university is not permitted. The exception is matriculation with a time limit at other universities in the framework of research collaboration, or mobility/exchange programmes.

²Simultaneous matriculation at the doctorate level at ETH Zurich and at another academic level at ETH Zurich or another university must be reported to the supervisor.

Art. 13b Dematriculation / withdrawal

Dematriculation or withdrawal signifies expiry of all rights associated with matriculation.

Art. 13c Withdrawal by the doctoral student

Doctoral students who wish to leave ETH Zurich before completing the doctorate must explain in writing or in a personal discussion with the Rectorate why they wish to withdraw.

Art. 13d Dematriculation by ETH Zurich

¹Persons who have completed the doctorate are automatically dematriculated.

²Doctoral students are also dematriculated if:

- a. they obtained admission to doctoral studies based upon false or incomplete data;
- b. they do not enrol for the semester;
- c. they fail to respect payment deadlines for tuition fees, obligatory semester fees or any other fees;
- d. they fail to respect the deadline for the doctoral examination as set out in Art. 27, Para. 4;
- e. they have not found a new supervisor for the doctoral thesis in accordance with Art. 20, Para. 2;
- f. disciplinary procedures are pending against them in relation to the Disciplinary Code of ETH Zürich of 2 November 2004.¹⁷

¹⁵ Originally Art. 13.

¹⁶ Added via Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

¹⁷ SR 414.138.1

Art. 13e Re-entry to doctoral studies at ETH Zurich

Re-entry to doctoral studies at ETH Zurich is subject to the normal admissions procedures set out in Art. 5–12.

Section 2: Doctoral thesis

Art. 14 Topic

The topic of the doctoral thesis must have its focus in the supervisor's area of expertise and may be interdisciplinary.

Art. 15 Thesis supervision and mentoring

¹The thesis supervisor may appoint one or more additional mentors for the doctoral candidate, as required.

²At the supervisor's request the doctoral committee appoints a co-examiner and informs the Rector of this appointment. The appointment must take place no later than three years following the date of provisional admission. In the course of doctoral studies the doctoral committee may designate further co-examiners, either of its own volition or at the request of the supervisor.¹⁸

³Doctoral students submit a written annual report on the progress of their work to the supervisor, either at the latter's request or of their own accord. The supervisor provides immediate written feedback.

Art. 16 Conducting the doctoral thesis project

¹As a rule, the doctoral thesis project must be carried out at ETH Zurich or at another institution of the ETH domain.¹⁹

²It may be conducted outside the ETH domain if the thesis topic requires it and the necessary prerequisites allow it; this is subject to the department's approval.

³The supervisor may authorize brief research visits outside the ETH domain.

⁴The supervisor must in any case have access to experiment documents and to the facilities used.

Art. 17 Disagreements

¹In cases of serious disagreement between the supervisor and the doctoral candidate, the head of the department concerned or his/her designated representative will attempt to settle the dispute amicably.

²If necessary, the Prorector will act as mediator.

³If mediation fails and the supervisor wishes to renounce his/her role, the Prorector for Doctoral Studies will, at the doctoral candidate's request, refer the matter to the Arbitration Committee.

⁴Should no agreement be reached, the Rector will make the final decision.

Art. 18 Members of the Arbitration Committee

¹The Arbitration Committee for doctoral studies comprises the following persons:

- a. the Prorector for Doctoral Studies (Chair)
- b. the Head of the respective department or, as his/her representative, the respective Director of Studies
- c. a representative of the ETH Association of Scientific Staff (AVETH).

²AVETH elects its representative to the Arbitration Committee for a term of two years. Re-election is possible.

³No persons involved in the thesis project may serve on the Arbitration Committee.

¹⁸ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

¹⁹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

Art. 19 Arbitration Committee procedure

¹The Arbitration Committee hears both parties and submits a conciliatory proposal if indicated.

²If no conciliatory proposal is submitted or if such a proposal is rejected by one party, the Arbitration Committee concludes the procedure and forwards its recommendations to the Rector.

Art. 20 Resignation and absence from duty of the supervisor

¹If the supervisor of the doctoral thesis fails to respect the outcome of the procedure specified in Art. 17 and without sufficient grounds resigns his/her supervisory role or is absent from duty, the department will make every possible effort to ensure that the doctoral thesis project may proceed.

²If the department is unsuccessful, the doctoral candidate is given a maximum of six months to find a new supervisor him/herself.²⁰

Art. 21 Language

¹The doctoral thesis may be written in German, French, Italian or English. A mixture of languages is not permitted.

²On the doctoral candidate's written and substantiated request the Rector may authorise an exception.

³In any case, an abstract must be formulated in German, French or Italian and in English.

Section 3: Doctoral studies

Art. 22²¹ Objective

¹Doctoral candidates have the right and the obligation to pursue their education in the framework of doctoral studies.

²The objectives of doctoral studies are the following:

- a. enable doctoral candidates to acquire knowledge and skills in the field of the doctoral thesis, related disciplines and interdisciplinary areas
- b. integrate doctoral candidates into the scientific community.

Art. 23²² Form

¹Doctoral studies are conducted either:

- a. in the framework of an individually designed programme;
- b. within a set departmental doctoral programme.

²Doctoral candidates draw up a programme for individual doctoral studies in consultation with the supervisor.

³Departments set detailed stipulations regarding individual doctoral studies and doctoral programmes. These stipulations require the approval of the Executive Board.

⁴If the doctoral thesis project is conducted outside the ETH domain, the department determines the requirements for doctoral studies at the request of the supervisor.

Art. 24²³ Performance record

¹Progress in doctoral studies is documented in the form of credits.

²One credit corresponds to a workload of 25–30 hours.

²⁰ Added via Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²¹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²² Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²³ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

Art. 25²⁴ Requirements

¹Doctoral candidates must acquire at least 12 credits.

²At least one third of these must be acquired outside the candidate's respective research field.

Art. 25a²⁵ Achievements recognised

¹Credits are only allocated for verifiable independent achievements.

²Active participation in ETH committees and working groups may be recognised in the form of credits.

³No credits are allocated for examinations undertaken for admission to doctoral studies.

Section 4: Doctorate procedure

Art. 26 Examination committee

¹The examination committee comprises the following persons:

- a. a chairperson
- b. the thesis supervisor as examiner
- c. the co-examiner
- d. another independent expert if there is a relationship of dependence between the supervisor and the co-examiner

²The head of department appoints the chairperson.

³At least one of the co-examiners must be a professor if the supervisor is not.

Art. 27 Doctoral examination

¹The doctoral examination consists of an oral examination of at least one hour which covers the discipline or the field of the thesis.

²The doctoral examination is conducted by the examination committee.

³The Department Conference determines how far the examination will be open to the public.

⁴The doctoral examination must take place within six years of provisional admission at the latest. At the department's request the Rector may grant an extension in exceptional cases.²⁶

Art. 28 Doctoral thesis assessment and oral examination

¹The examiner and every co-examiner each prepares a written report on the doctoral thesis and submits it to the department before the examination.

²The examination committee assesses both the doctoral thesis and the oral examination as passed or failed, and submits a report to the respective Department Conference.

Art. 28a²⁷ Confidentiality of experts' report

¹Pursuant to Art. 28, Para. 1, the experts' reports are confidential.

²Authorised to view the experts' reports are:

- a. members of the examination committee
- b. members of further bodies tasked with assessing the doctoral thesis

³Doctoral students have no right to view the expert's reports pertaining to their own doctoral theses.

Art. 29 Retakes

²⁴ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²⁵ Added via Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²⁶ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²⁷ Added via Section I of V d

¹Doctoral students who fail the doctoral examination may retake it once within six months.

²If the doctoral thesis receives a fail grade it may be revised once. The examination committee determines the deadline for the revision and informs the doctoral student in writing on further steps.²⁸

Art. 30²⁹ Awarding of the doctoral degree

On the basis of the examination committee's report, the Department Conference of the department in which the doctoral student is enrolled decides whether to award or withhold the doctoral degree.

Art. 31 Doctoral degree certificate

¹The doctoral degree certificate contains

- a. the name of the doctoral graduate
- b. the doctoral title
- c. the title of the doctoral thesis
- d. the date of the doctoral examination
- e. the date from which the doctoral title may be used
- f. the signatures of the Rector and head of department who are in office on the date from which the doctoral title may be used
- g. the ETH Zurich seal.³⁰

²The doctoral certificate is presented to the graduate at the doctoral awards ceremony following submission of deposit copies and an electronic version of the doctoral thesis.

Art. 32³¹ Use of the doctoral title

When the deposit copies and an electronic version of the doctoral thesis have been received the doctoral graduate will receive a confirmation that he/she may use the doctoral title.

Art. 33 Fee

A fee is charged for the regular doctorate.

Chapter 3: Intellectual property rights

Art. 34 Copyright

¹Apart from the reservation given in Art. 35 the doctoral thesis is governed by general intellectual property law.

²The doctoral thesis may not be published in its entirety until the Department Conference has accepted it.³²

³Contracts with third parties, such as research contracts, may not substantially delay publication and may under no conditions prohibit it.

⁴ETH Zurich may provide scientific and public institutions with abstracts or copies of the doctoral thesis.

⁵With the delivery of the electronic version of the doctoral thesis ETH Zurich obtains the right to make it publicly available and to archive it. Excepted are where the interests of persons involved require protection, i.e. where patent registration is planned and where follow-up experimentation at research institutions is ongoing, and where conflicting third-party rights exist.³³

²⁸ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

²⁹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

³⁰ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

³¹ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

³² Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

³³ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).

Art. 35 Inventions

Rights to an invention produced in the context of doctoral thesis work are governed by labour law.

Chapter 4: Honorary doctorates

Art. 36

¹ETH Zurich confers the honorary doctorate if

- a. conferral is requested by full, associate and assistant professors of a department with no dissenting voices;
- b.³⁴ the conference of department heads approves the request with a majority of the members entitled to vote.

²Votes are cast by secret ballot; abstention is permitted.

³The Rector details the honorary doctorate procedure in a directive.

⁴He/She confers honorary doctorates at an academic event.

Chapter 5: Administration of justice

Art. 37

¹Decrees issued on the basis of this ordinance may be appealed by filing a complaint.

²The appellate body is the ETH Appeals Committee.

Chapter 6: Final provisions

Art. 38 Implementation provisions

The Rector issues implementation provisions with regard to the following in particular:

- a. the organisation of the admissions examination
- b. doctoral thesis projects conducted outside the ETH domain
- c. the doctorate procedure and the doctoral examination
- d. submission of the doctoral thesis and delivery of deposit copies
- e. supervision of doctoral theses if supervisors resign or retire
- f. prerequisites for the designating of supervisors and co-examiners
- g. delivery of abstracts or copies of the doctoral thesis to scientific and public institutions.

Art. 39 Repeal of previous regulations

The ETH Zurich Doctorate Ordinance of 16 December 2000³⁵ is hereby repealed.

Art. 40³⁶ Transitional provisions

¹Doctoral candidates who were matriculated before 1 January 2003 should declare when they register for the doctoral examination whether they would prefer a doctoral title as per Art. 3, Para. 1 or a title according to earlier law.

²Doctoral candidates who were matriculated before 1 April 2001 must have undertaken the doctoral examination for the first time on 1 November 2014 at the latest.

³⁴ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

³⁵ [AS 2001 1665, 2003 209, 2004 2963, 2005 1099]

³⁶ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS 2013 3369).

³Doctoral candidates who were matriculated before 1 October 1998 are not required to document any credits from doctoral studies.

Art. 40a³⁷ Transitional provisions as per the alteration of 20 August 2013

Art. 25a, Para. 3 does not apply to doctoral candidates who were matriculated before 1 November 2013.

Art. 41 Effective date

This ordinance is effective as of 1 September 2008.

³⁷ Version as per Section I of V of the ETHZ Executive Board of 20 Aug. 2013, in effect since 1 Nov. 2013 (AS **2013** 3369).