
Demystifying Thesis Evaluation

Who, what, when, how and why?

Agenda

- Who's involved and how?
 - Process
 - Grading scale
 - Thesis presentation and its role
 - Evaluation matrix
 - Evaluation statements
 - Appealing the decision
 - Grading exercise
 - Conclusion
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Stakeholders

- Evaluation committee
 - Final word on the grade, confirms the evaluators
 - Who are *they*?
 - Supervisor and advisor(s)
 - The supervisor is in charge of the general process and finding the evaluators – the advisors often help
 - Study coordinator
 - Takes care of the practicalities such as payments, checking the degree requirements and sending emails
 - Evaluators
 - You!
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More on evaluators

- Experts of the field – who's a good candidate?
 - Usually two of them
 - Often one from Aalto and another from elsewhere
 - Generally need to have at least a master's degree, with rare exceptions
 - Write an evaluation statement and propose a grade
 - You too can propose evaluators to your supervisor, as long as they're not too close to you
 - They get paid too
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The process

- **Submitting the abstract**
 - Supervisor starts looking for evaluators already
 - **Submitting the thesis**
 - Evaluation committee confirms the evaluators
 - Evaluators examine the thesis and write their statement
 - **Thesis presentation**
 - Evaluators confirm their grade
 - Evaluation committee decides on the final grade
 - You get the grade and the statements
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Grading scale

This should be familiar by now:

- 5: excellent
- 4: very good
- 3: good
- 2: satisfactory
- 1: pass
- 0: fail

What are typical grades?

Grade 0 – fail

Grounds for failing a thesis:

- Not good enough quality
 - We usually don't let theses go to evaluation if this the case
 - Too short, less than 50 000 characters
 - Hardly ever applied, as a big production part can compensate for this
 - Plagiarism
 - Run your thesis through *Turnitin*
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Thesis presentation

- Each presentation slot is about an hour
 - Your presentation about 20 minutes – don't exceed it
 - Not unlike the 2nd presentation at the seminar, use the opportunity to practice already – and go see some!
 - Evaluators ask you questions and give feedback
 - ... if they can make it to the presentation
 - Grades not mentioned here
 - The audience gets their turn too if time allows
 - *Can* affect your grade as it's part of the evaluation matrix
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Evaluation matrix

Can be found on the *Thesis Guide*. Evaluation criteria:

- Choice of topic and the goals
 - Command of topic and use of sources
 - Discussion of the topic, conclusions and interpretation
 - Quality of the artistic component
 - Description and analysis of the process
 - Quality of language and presentation
 - Knowledge and professional skills
 - Overall impression
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Evaluation statements

- Written evaluations of your written part and production (if any)
 - Range from one to several pages
 - Based on the evaluation matrix, but individual aspects are not graded separately
 - You'll receive the written statements after the final grade is decided
 - Let's hear an example!
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Appealing the decision

- Evaluators are people, too
 - Appealing the decision is your *right*
 - Needs to be done within 14 days
 - Goes first to the Academic Appeals Committee
 - Evaluation committee may reopen the case
 - Often a third evaluation is needed to make a decision
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Good and bad appeals

What doesn't work:

- I deserve a better grade because my thesis was so good

What works:

- Pointing out shortcomings of the evaluations: short, one-eyed, contain false claims
- Pointing out errors in the evaluation process itself



Grading exercise

Let's evaluate *Designing Antikythera—A tactile interactive poetry application for iPad* (Shakti Dash, 2015)

<https://aaltodoc.aalto.fi/handle/123456789/18592>

After considering the different criteria of the evaluation matrix, vote here:

<https://presemo.aalto.fi/grading>

And, finally, we'll discuss the results

Conclusion

- Supervisor is in charge of finding the evaluators – you can suggest
 - Evaluators use the evaluation matrix and write a statement
 - Evaluation committee decides the grade based on two evaluators' suggestions (0–5)
 - You can appeal the decision if there's a real reason
 - Our study coordinator helps you with practical issues
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