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# Demystifying Thesis Evaluation

Who, what, when, how and why?

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# 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

- Programme 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, *these days one is your supervisor*
  - 2nd evaluator can be from Aalto or also 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
  - External evaluators get paid
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# The process

- **Submitting the abstract/interest to graduate**
  - Supervisor starts looking for evaluators already
  - **Presentation** (fall 2022 only)
  - **Submitting the thesis**
  - Evaluators examine the thesis and write their statement
  - Supervisor proposes a final grade
  - Programme committee confirms the 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?

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# 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 (fall 2022 only!)

- Each presentation slot is about an hour
  - Your presentation is 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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## Thesis presentation 2023→

- Will not be part of the evaluation any longer
  - Some details still need sorting out, as this is still new to everyone
  - Most likely your 2nd presentation at the seminar will be *it*
  - Bring your supervisor to hear it
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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

Let's see the actual matrix

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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
  - The entity called *Academic Appeals Committee*
  - At times 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



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# 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

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# Conclusion

- Supervisor is in charge of finding the evaluators – you can suggest
  - Evaluators use the evaluation matrix and write a statement
  - Programme committee decides the grade based on the supervisor's suggestion (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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