

Procedure for Doctoral Dissertation Submission and Defence at the Institute of Computer Science of UT

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1. Documents of the University

1. [Study Regulations](#) (effective as of 4 September 2023)
2. [Regulations for Doctoral Studies](#) (effective as of 1 May 2025)
3. [Additional conditions for awarding doctoral degrees in the Faculty of Science and Technology](#) (effective as of 11 November 2024)

2. Defence progress at a glance

There are three steps that each PhD thesis has to go through to reach a defence:

1. thesis review;
2. approving the thesis to the defence;
3. the defence meeting and decision-making.

Most required communication goes through the Academic Secretary of the ICS council, who also does some initial checking of documents.

3. Defence progress in detail

3.1 Thesis review

3.1.1 Approving the thesis for review

The candidate submits the thesis, an [application](#), and popular scientific summaries (in both Estonian and English, max 2000 characters) to the Academic Secretary of the ICS. Please keep in mind that the articles are part of the thesis and are included in the thesis in the case of an integrated collection of research publications. Additionally, the candidate verifies the relevance and accuracy of the data on the articles used in the thesis in the ETIS system.

The Academic Secretary of the ICS verifies whether the candidate has fulfilled the “Study Module” requirements of the curriculum. If the “Study Module” is not fulfilled, the candidate must eliminate any shortcomings before the ICS council approves the thesis for review.

The supervisor(s) sends a written opinion(s) to the Academic Secretary of the ICS on the originality of the doctoral thesis, the candidate's contributions, and the thesis's compliance with content and format requirements (whether it is an integrated collection of research publications or a monograph). Additionally, the supervisor(s) proposes peer reviewers (both internal and external) along with a brief justification for each reviewer's suitability for evaluating the thesis.

The requirements for the internal reviewer and peer reviewers are as follows:

- (1) one internal reviewer from the ICS, who has a PhD or equivalent qualification and is a member of the academic staff at the Institute. It is strongly recommended to select an internal reviewer who has no joint publications with, and is not involved in the same projects as, the supervisor(s) or the candidate. Exceptions are allowed in justified cases, however, the supervisor(s) must explain why this person is the most suitable choice and why no other expert from the ICS can be involved.
- (2) two peer reviewers who fulfill the requirements of clauses 131 and 131¹ in “Regulations for Doctoral studies” ([link](#)). In addition, the ICS council strongly suggests that at least one of the peer reviewers holds the rank of Associate Professor or an equivalent position.

The Academic Secretary of the ICS council sends collected materials (excluding data about reviewers) to the University's Academic Secretary, who assesses the compliance of the submitted materials according to clause 124 in “Regulations for Doctoral Studies” ([link](#)).

It must be kept in mind that all documents must be submitted at least **15 working days** before the Institute Council meeting. The upcoming Institute's Council meetings are shown in ([link](#)).

The ICS council makes one of the following decisions on the thesis described in clause 125 in “Regulations of Doctoral Studies”:

- (1) allows the doctoral thesis to be defended;
- (2) approves submitting the doctoral thesis for a peer review;
- (3) in the case of deficiencies, demands the reformulation and correction of the doctoral thesis, making a new decision after that;
- (4) does not allow the doctoral thesis to be defended.

Also, the ICS council makes one of the following decisions on internal reviewer and peer reviewers:

- (1) approves the suggested internal reviewer and peer reviewers;
- (2) does not approve the internal reviewer and peer reviewers giving clear recommendations.

3.1.2 The internal review, peer review process, and thesis practice defence

After the thesis is approved for internal review and peer review, both the internal reviewer and the peer reviewers begin their work in parallel. The internal reviewer must submit their

review within one month. Following this, the candidate will revise their thesis and write a response to the internal reviewer.

The peer reviewers must submit their review within two months (a one-month extension can be granted in special cases). At the end of the review, the peer reviewers must clearly state their opinions on the thesis:

- accepted – the thesis is ready for defence with no changes required;
- minor revision – the thesis is ready for defence, but suggestions/comments should be addressed. No additional review is required from the reviewer;
- major revision – suggestions/comments should be addressed, and the peer reviewer would like to receive the revised version of the thesis for further review.

The candidate will revise their thesis based on peer reviews and write responses to the peer reviewers.

In parallel with the review process, a thesis practice defence is organized. The purpose of practice defence is to give a doctoral student an opportunity to practice public speaking, present the results of their work to the audience, and receive feedback on the thesis from senior academic colleagues. The internal reviewer also participates in this event. The candidate must present their thesis at practice defence before the ICS council can approve the thesis for the defence.

Once the reviewers are satisfied with the thesis and the thesis practice defence is done, the thesis is submitted to the ICS council for approval to proceed to the defence.

The next steps for each role holder at this stage are described below:

The Academic Secretary of the ICS

- (1) After the Council has approved the thesis for review, informs the candidate and supervisor(s), and sends the thesis along with instructions to the internal reviewer and peer reviewers.
- (2) Sends the updated version of the thesis (in which the internal review suggestions have been considered) and the candidate's response with the changes made to the internal reviewer.
- (3) Based on feedback from the peer reviewers, sends the updated version of the thesis (in which the peer reviewers' suggestions have been considered) and the candidate's response with the changes made to the peer reviewers.
- (4) Organizes the thesis practice defence where the candidate, supervisor(s), internal reviewer, and senior academic colleagues are present. In justified cases, the thesis practice defence can also be held online.

The supervisor(s)

- (1) Send(s) a list of senior academic colleagues to be invited to attend the thesis practice defence to the Academic Secretary of the ICS.
- (2) Participate(s) in the thesis practice defence.

The internal reviewer

- (1) Sends the review to the candidate, supervisor(s), and the Academic Secretary of the ICS within one month after receiving the thesis.

- (2) After receiving the candidate's updated thesis with a response to the internal review, they confirm whether the thesis is ready for defence.
- (3) Participates in the thesis practice defence.

The peer reviewer

- (1) Sends the review to the candidate, supervisor(s), and the Academic Secretary of the ICS within two months after receiving the thesis.
- (2) Review the updated version of the thesis, if necessary.

The candidate

- (1) Updates the thesis and writes a response to the internal review and peer review after receiving them. In the response, the candidate highlights the changes made to the thesis or provides justifications if some of the suggested changes were not implemented. The candidate sends the updated thesis and response to the internal reviewer, peer reviewers, supervisor(s), and the Academic Secretary of the ICS.
- (2) Performs a presentation of their thesis practice defence.

3.2 Approving the thesis for the defence

To proceed with the approval of the thesis for defence, the candidate, supervisor(s), and the Academic Secretary of the ICS should ensure that the internal reviewer and peer reviewers agree that the thesis is ready for defence.

3.2.1 The date and additional members of the defence committee

The Academic Secretary of the ICS will arrange the date of the defence, taking into account the availability of the candidate, supervisor(s), potential opponents, and suitable rooms. They also consider the availability of the Institute Council members, additional members of the defence committee, other events taking place at the Institute, and any other relevant time constraints.

An internal reviewer cannot serve as an additional member of the defence committee.

The ICS council approves the opponents for the defence, additional members of the defence committee, and the defence date.

The Institute Council follows clauses 126-130 in "Regulations for Doctoral Studies" for making the decision:

- (1) allows the doctoral thesis to be defended;
- (2) in the case of deficiencies, demands the reformulation and correction of the doctoral thesis, making a new decision after that;
- (3) does not allow the doctoral thesis to be defended.

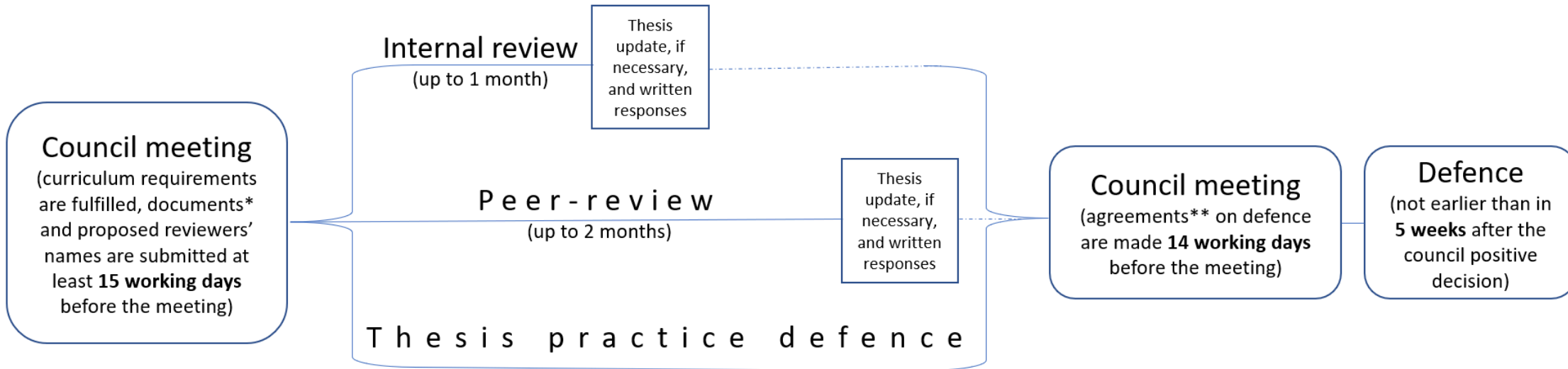
3.2.2 Requirements for the opponent

The peer reviewers of the thesis may serve as opponents. If any other person is considered for an opponent, they must meet the requirements outlined in clause 131 ja 131¹ in "Regulations for Doctoral Studies" ([link](#)).

3.3 The defence meeting and decision

The defence meeting and decision-making process are described in subchapters III.7.1 ([link](#)) and III.7.2 ([link](#)) in “Regulations for Doctoral Studies”.

Appendix 1. Graphical general representation of the process



* From the PhD candidate: thesis, application, popular scientific summaries in Estonian and English. Make sure the data in the ETIS system is up-to-date.
From the supervisor(s): written opinion

** Defence date is fixed (based on the candidate, supervisor(s), opponents and defence committee members availability); room is booked.