

## **Procedure for Supervising, Reviewing and Defending Graduation Theses at the Estonian Maritime Academy**

[\(original document\)](#)

### **1. General provisions**

#### **1.1 Purpose of the regulation**

1.1.1 This Procedure lays down the principles of supervision, review and defence of professional higher education and master's theses for students studying at the Estonian Maritime Academy. The procedure sets out also the programme director's and supervisor's responsibilities regarding graduation theses and the graduating student's rights and obligations.

#### **1.2 Basis of the regulation**

1.2.1 The university's [Academic Policies](#)

1.2.2 [Rules for Publication and Preservation of Graduation Theses](#)

1.2.3 [Procedure for Study Programme Management](#)

### **2. Definitions and abbreviations**

2.1 "EMERA" means the Estonian Maritime Academy

2.2 "university" means Tallinn, Tallinn University of Technology

2.3 "graduating student" means a student or an external student wishing to write/defend or writing/defending a graduation thesis.

2.4 "graduation thesis" means an independent research paper required for graduation and written by a student independently under a supervisor's guidance and the aims and learning outcomes of which are specified in the study programme;

2.5 "supervisor" means the person(s) supervising a graduation thesis who complies/comply with the requirements set out in § 26 of the university's [Academic Policies](#).

2.6 "programme director" means an employee of the Estonian Maritime Academy who is responsible for programme management in compliance with [the Procedure for Study Programme Management](#).

### **3. Rights and obligations of a graduating student**

#### **3.1 A graduating student shall:**

3.1.1 declare his/her graduation thesis in the individual study plan at the beginning of the semester or, in a justified case, submit an application to the dean for a later declaration of the thesis;

3.1.2 agree upon the topic of the planned graduation thesis with the supervisor;

3.1.3 initiate the signing of a confidentiality agreement prior to starting to write the thesis if confidential data are used in the preparation of the thesis and the institution/company providing the data requires signing of the confidentiality agreement;

3.1.4 submit an application for a closed defence and/or for imposing a restriction on

publication of the thesis if the graduation thesis contains a state secret, trade secret, information to be kept confidential on the basis of the Personal Data Protection Act, unpublished materials or any other classified information as set out in clause 6.4.;

- 3.1.5 prepare a thesis plan, obtain the approval of the supervisor and submit it in accordance with the procedure and deadlines specified in the study programme if a thesis plan is required in the study programme;
- 3.1.6 submit the parts of the thesis to the supervisor for review according to the deadlines specified in the study programme or agreed with the supervisor;
- 3.1.7 prepare and write the thesis in adherence to the guidelines of the Estonian Maritime Academy;
- 3.1.8 submit a thesis for preliminary defence by following the requirements and deadlines established in the study programme;
- 3.1.9 submit the thesis defence application by the deadline established in the academic calendar;
- 3.1.10 submit a graduation thesis in PDF format, incl. the non-exclusive licence (Annex 1 to the Publication and Preservation of Graduation Theses). These shall be submitted in the environment specified in clause 4.1. by the deadlines specified by the programme director. If access to the graduation thesis is restricted, the student shall submit an abstract of the graduation thesis together with the graduation thesis.

3.2 A graduating student has the right to:

- 3.2.1 contact the programme director for help in the case of problems related to finding a supervisor and supervision;
- 3.2.2 seek advice from the teaching staff on defining a topic and potential supervision (depending on the competence of the member of the teaching staff);
- 3.2.3 dispute the grade of the graduation thesis in accordance with the university's regulations.

#### **4. Programme director's responsibilities related to graduation theses**

4.1 A programme director shall:

- 4.1.1 make sure e-support is provided (in Moodle) for preparing graduation theses in the study programme;
- 4.1.2 decide on the need, procedure and deadlines for submitting a thesis plan and, if necessary, prepare a thesis plan template;
- 4.1.3 decide on the inclusion of preliminary defence in the study programme, specify the requirements for the theses to be pre-defended, the terms and conditions and deadlines for preliminary defence (incl. the deadlines for the activities following a preliminary defence) in the study programme;
- 4.1.4 ensure that all necessary information is available to student counsellors via the EMERA website and e-support no later than the start of the first week of the semester;
- 4.1.5 provide advice to graduating students in the case of problems related to supervision or finding a supervisor;
- 4.1.6 assess suitability of the supervisor's qualifications and its correspondence to the

topic selected by the graduating student.

4.2 A programme director has the right to:

- 4.2.1 set intermediate deadlines for the submission of the parts of a graduation thesis in the study programme. The abovementioned deadlines must be available on the study programme subpage or via e-support no later than the start of the first academic week of the semester;
- 4.2.2 turn to the head of the Centre of Maritime Education and Training and/or the study director of the Estonian Maritime Academy in order to solve questions or problems related to the supervision of a thesis.

## 5. Supervision of graduation theses

5.1 The supervisor of a graduation thesis must be a member of TalTech's permanent academic staff. A graduating student may request the involvement of a co-supervisor from outside TalTech by submitting to the programme director a written application previously approved by the supervisor together with evidence of the supervisor's qualifications required in the Academic Policies;

5.2 experts may be involved in the graduation thesis supervision process in order to get discipline-specific input. Their work is not remunerated separately.

5.3 Supervisor's responsibilities:

5.3.1 to provide assistance to the graduating student in discipline-specific and methodological issues, incl.

5.3.1.1 to provide feedback and give recommendations regarding the thesis plan prepared by the graduating student, incl. the goal, structure, theoretical framework and methodology of the planned graduation thesis;

5.3.1.2 to read the completed text or its parts, draw attention to the strengths and weaknesses of the graduation thesis written/being prepared;

5.3.1.3 to assess the level of readiness of the thesis for preliminary defence,

5.3.1.4 to assess whether the thesis is eligible and ready for submission for defence, and approve it by signing the defence application in the study information system (SIS) by the deadline established in the academic calendar;

5.3.2 to provide his/her assessment of the graduation thesis at the defence.

5.4 If the person supervised has failed to comply with the deadlines agreed with the supervisor or any other deadlines set for writing the thesis, the supervisor has the right to refuse further supervision of the graduating student.

5.5 As a rule, no separate remuneration is paid to a member TalTech academic staff for supervision, unless permission has been obtained from the head of the Centre of Maritime Education and Training for remuneration. The remuneration of a co-supervisor from outside EMERA is decided and formalised by the programme director.

## 6. Reviewing graduation theses

6.1 All professional higher education and master's theses are subject to review.

6.2 As a rule, professional higher education theses shall be reviewed by an EMERA employee

appointed at the preliminary defence session.

- 6.3 Master's theses must be reviewed by two persons, a member of TalTech academic staff and an expert in the field from outside EMERA, appointed by the chairman of the defence committee, who takes into account the proposals of the graduating student and the supervisor.
- 6.4 The review form (see Annex 1) can be used to write a review.
- 6.5 No separate remuneration is paid to a member TalTech academic staff for reviewing unless permission has been obtained from the head of the Centre of Maritime Education and Training for remuneration. The remuneration of a reviewer from outside EMERA is decided and formalised by the programme director.
- 6.6 A reviewer of a professional higher education graduation thesis must have at least higher education, a reviewer of a master's thesis must have at least a master's degree or an equivalent qualification.
- 6.7 A reviewer :
  - 6.7.1 shall, no later than 3 working days before the defence, submit the review in writing to the secretary of the defence committee, who shall forward it also to the graduating student;
  - 6.7.2 participates at the graduation thesis defence by reading out his/her review, if possible. If the reviewer cannot participate in the defence, the chairman of the defence session shall read out his/her review.

## 7. Graduation thesis defence

- 7.1 The members of a defence committee are appointed in September of each academic year by the director's order in accordance with the proposal of the programme directors for the entire academic year. The defence committees shall be approved by the study director. The chairman of the defence committee, the vice-chairman of the defence committee who replaces him/her whenever necessary, and the secretary of the defence committee shall also be appointed by the order. As a rule, no remuneration is paid for the work of the defence committee, unless otherwise agreed with the head of the Centre.
- 7.2 The chairman of the defence committee or a person authorised by the chairman of the defence committee shall organise the defence of graduation theses. Regular defences shall be completed by the deadline set out in the academic calendar.
- 7.3 The defence of graduation theses shall be open, unless the defence has been declared closed.
- 7.4 The director shall decide on declaring a defence closed and imposing a restriction on publication of the thesis based on a reasoned request of the graduating student that has been previously approved by the supervisor(s). In order to submit the relevant request, the graduating student must:
  - 7.4.1 prepare a free-form request;
  - 7.4.2 submit the request signed by him/her and his/her supervisor to the secretary of the defence committee no later than the deadline for submission of applications for defence. If preliminary defence is to be conducted in the study programme, the corresponding request must be submitted no later than a week before the preliminary defence.
- 7.5 The director may, based on the graduating student's reasoned request approved

previously by the supervisor(s) and the chairman of the defence committee, allow participation at a defence by using a means of real-time two-way video image and sound communication. To this end, the graduating student shall submit a free-format request signed by him/her and his/her supervisor(s) to the secretary of the defence committee.

- 7.6 The secretary of the defence committee shall submit the request referred to in clause 7.4 or 7.5 to the chairman of the defence committee and thereafter to the director for approval.
- 7.7 In the case of a closed defence, the members of the defence committee shall also be subject to the confidentiality requirement.
- 7.8 The chairman of the defence committee shall decide whether to admit a thesis for defence and shall confirm the decision by his/her signature on the reverse side of the title page of the thesis. The chairman of the defence committee has the right to refuse to admit a thesis for defence if it does not comply with the requirements. In this case the chairman of the defence committee shall:
  - 7.8.1 provide the graduating student a written explanation concerning refusal to admit the graduation thesis for defence;
  - 7.8.2 not allow the graduating student to correct the thesis and resubmit the thesis for defence in the semester it was first submitted, however, he/she must inform the graduating student of the subsequent possibilities to defend the thesis;
  - 7.8.3 immediately forward the information about the refusal to admit the graduation thesis for defence to the student counsellor of the study programme and the secretary of the defence committee.
- 7.9 All the graduation theses submitted for defence shall be checked for plagiarism. The secretary of the defence committee shall check the graduation theses before the defence using a plagiarism detection system by entering the graduation theses in the corresponding database.
  - 7.9.1 On the basis of the results obtained from the plagiarism detection system, the chairman of the defence committee or the persons appointed by the chairman of the defence committee shall decide whether plagiarism (violation of good academic practice) has occurred in the thesis.
  - 7.9.2 If plagiarism occurs in a graduation thesis, the chairman of the defence committee has the right to refuse to admit the thesis for defence.
  - 7.9.3 If a graduation thesis contains plagiarism, the chairman of the defence committee shall, in addition to the activities listed in clause 7.8.3:
    - 7.9.3.1 inform of the violation in accordance with the Procedure for Handling Violation of Good Academic Practice;
    - 7.9.3.2 present in the explanation the main plagiarised sources (those with highest match rates);
    - 7.9.3.3 forward the full plagiarism check report to the supervisor of the graduating student.
- 7.10 The secretary of the defence committee shall forward the final defence schedule to the graduating students not later than 3 working days before the defence. The defence schedule shall be published on EMERA's website.
- 7.11 The defence procedure shall be determined by the chairman of the defence

committee based on the following principles:

- 7.11.1 a defence takes place if at least 3 members of the defence committee, including the chairman or vice-chairman of the defence committee are present;
- 7.11.2 The defence speech and defence discussion of each graduating student may be recorded by electronic means at the proposal of the chairman or member of the committee and with the consent of the graduating student.
- 7.11.3 The defence language is Estonian; if the thesis has been written in English, the thesis can also be defended in English;
- 7.11.4 The defence procedure:
  - 7.11.4.1 the defence speech of the graduating student, which shall last 10-12 minutes in the case of a professional higher education graduation thesis and 12-15 minutes in the case of a master's thesis;
  - 7.11.4.2 introduction of the review(s) and answering the questions of the reviewer(s);
  - 7.11.4.3 a discussion led by the chairman of the defence committee, during which questions are asked first by members of the defence committee and the chairman, and then by those present;
  - 7.11.4.4 introduction of the supervisor's opinion;
  - 7.11.4.5 summary of the chairman of the defence committee;
  - 7.11.4.6 The summary of the chairman of the defence committee can be followed by the closing remarks of the graduating student enabling the graduating student to thank the people who contributed to the preparation of the thesis and participated in the defence discussion;
- 7.11.5 the results of the defence shall be published in the study information system no later than the day following the day of the defence.
- 7.12 The defence committee shall assess graduation theses and their defence based on the established graduation thesis assessment criteria (Annex 2).
  - 7.12.1 At the defence, each member of the defence committee shall assess the graduation theses separately; the overall grade decided at the closed discussion of the committee is entered on the grading sheet of the defence committee. The individual grades given by the members of the committee shall not be disclosed and in the event of a dispute, all possible dissenting opinions of the committee members shall remain anonymous.
  - 7.12.2 The final grade of a thesis shall be determined by taking into account the individual grades given by the members of the defence committee who were present at the defence and the reviewer's grade. The supervisor's opinion is deemed to be informative.
- 7.13 The grading sheet shall be recorded in minutes.

## **8. Preserving graduation theses**

- 8.1 The secretary of the defence committee shall make sure that every thesis that has received a positive grade and has no access restrictions, including multimedia files (sound and video or audiovisual recordings) that form part of the thesis, is published in the digital collection of TalTech library immediately after the defence of the thesis. If access to the graduation thesis is restricted, only the abstract of the graduation thesis is

published during the validity period of the restriction.

**REVIEW**

The review has been prepared for the thesis.....  
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written by the graduating student of the Estonian Maritime

Academy.....

(First name and surname)

1. Please assess the graduation thesis below, indicating the corresponding grade:

(0 – failed, 1 – poor, 2 – satisfactory, 3 – good, 4 – very good, 5 – excellent)

1.1. General structure and formatting of the thesis	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.2. Integrity and logic of the treatment of the topic	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.3. Relevance of the topic	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.4. Competence in presenting theoretical material and its practical application	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.5. Ability to analyse collected materials and/or data	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.6. The student's creativity and applicability and logicity of the student's recommendations	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.7. Use of specialist language and style	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.8. Evaluation of literature usage and referencing	0	1	2	3	4	5
1.9. GENERAL ASSESSMENT OF THE THESIS	0	1	2	3	4	5



2 Please indicate what deserves to be pointed out in the thesis under review, identify any shortcomings and write down questions and/or comments concerning the thesis.

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Reviewer's name .....

Signature ..... Date .....

Education.....

Position.....