

Information Event on

# The Doctoral Exam: Public or Not?

23rd of July 2025

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Information event on

## The Doctoral Exam: Public or Not?

Are you curious about why the doctoral defense is partly public and partly taking place behind closed doors? Wondering if this is the best way to do it?

**Join us as we:**

- explain the current procedure
- explore alternative ideas
- open the floor for discussion and your perspectives

**Date: 23rd of July 2025**

**Time: 18:00**

**Location: Small Lecture Hall B**



Organised by the KIT-Faculty of Physics and  
the Physics PhD Student Council

# Who are we

- **PhD student council**
  - Representatino of interests of the PhD students at the department of physics
- **Representative Board**
  - Lena Hauswald (IMS)
  - Greta Heine (ETP)
  - Mariia Poleva (TFP)
  - Marie Louise Schubert (TFP) - Speaker
  - Jan Voss (ETP)



Our Website

# The Current System (Status Quo)

The Doctoral Exam consists of two parts

## 1. Defense Talk (Presentation)



- **Public** - Faculty open + family and friends

## 2. Examination (Q&A with committee)

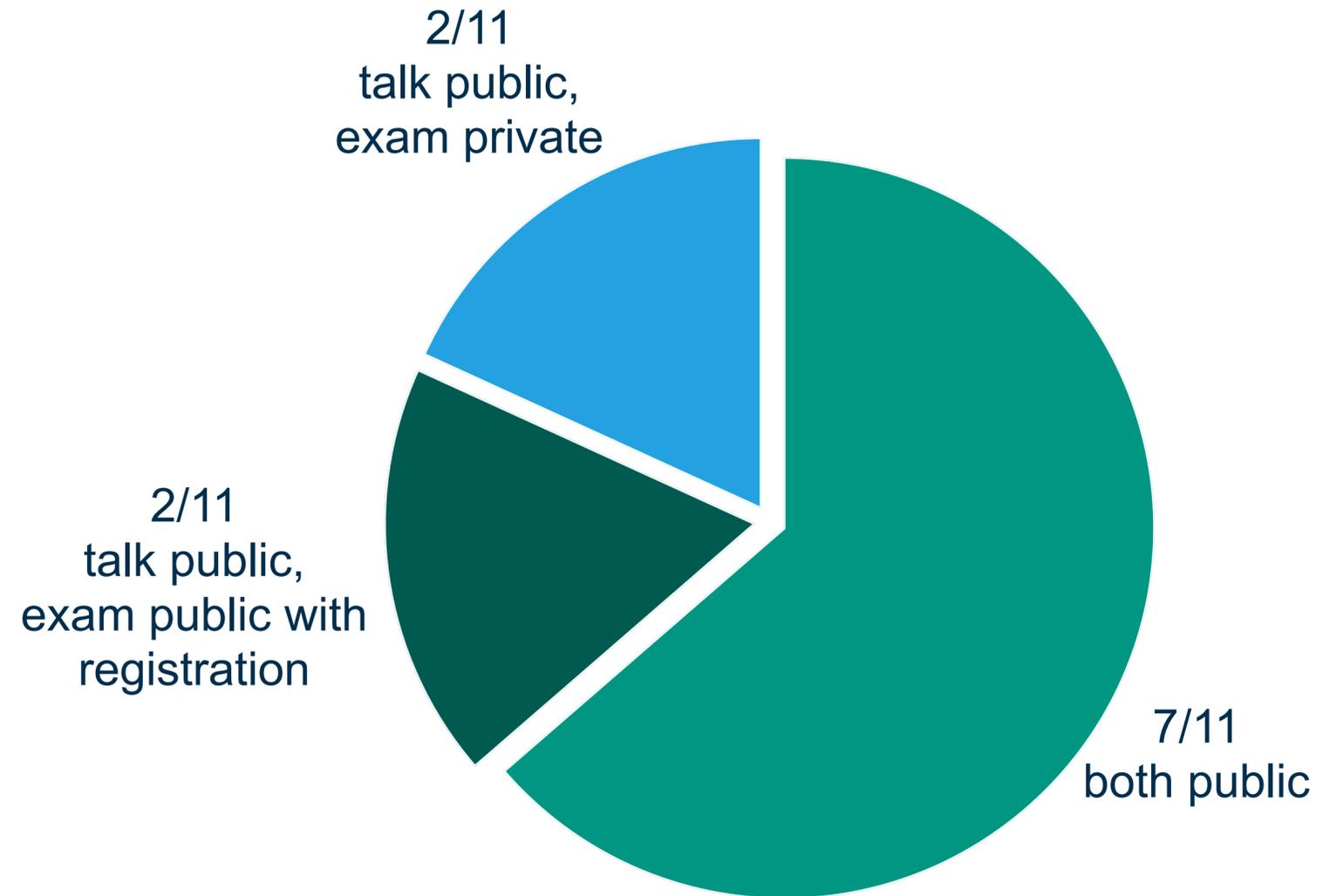


- **Private** - Only the official examiners are present

This makes the KIT faculty of physics one of only 2 faculties that don't offer participation in the exam part for non-examinors

More Info:

<https://www.physik.kit.edu/english/studies/doctorate.php>



Overview over KIT faculties

# Proposed Change: More Flexibility

- PhD candidates should be able to **choose individually**

| Component          | Current Rule   | Proposed Option                      |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Talk</b>        | Usually public | Candidate chooses: public or private |
| <b>Examination</b> | Always private | Candidate chooses: public or private |

- **Goal:**
  - Respect individual comfort levels
  - allow for more inclusive and transparent defenses

# Pros and Cons of a Public Doctoral Examination

| Pros                                                                         | Cons *                                                                                                           |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Allows friends, family, and colleagues to attend and offer emotional support | Adds pressure on the candidate due to public exposure                                                            |
| Increases transparency and demystifies the exam process                      | Changes the dynamic – exam more like a query instead of a scientific dialog                                      |
| Encourages post-exam discussion about fairness and question difficulty       | Potential for candidates to feel humiliated in case of weak answers                                              |
| Provides witnesses in case of later disputes about the exam process          | Such discussions can create unrest, as comparisons are often unfair due to differing topics and grading criteria |
| Helps candidates prepare better by attending other public defenses           | Risk of examiners showing off or posing difficult questions to impress the audience                              |

\* The proposed change foresees to enable both options based on the personal preferences

# Poll

- What is your opinion?
- Do you want a change of the current system?
- What would be your (personal) favourite mode of the doctoral exam?
  
- Fill out the form :)

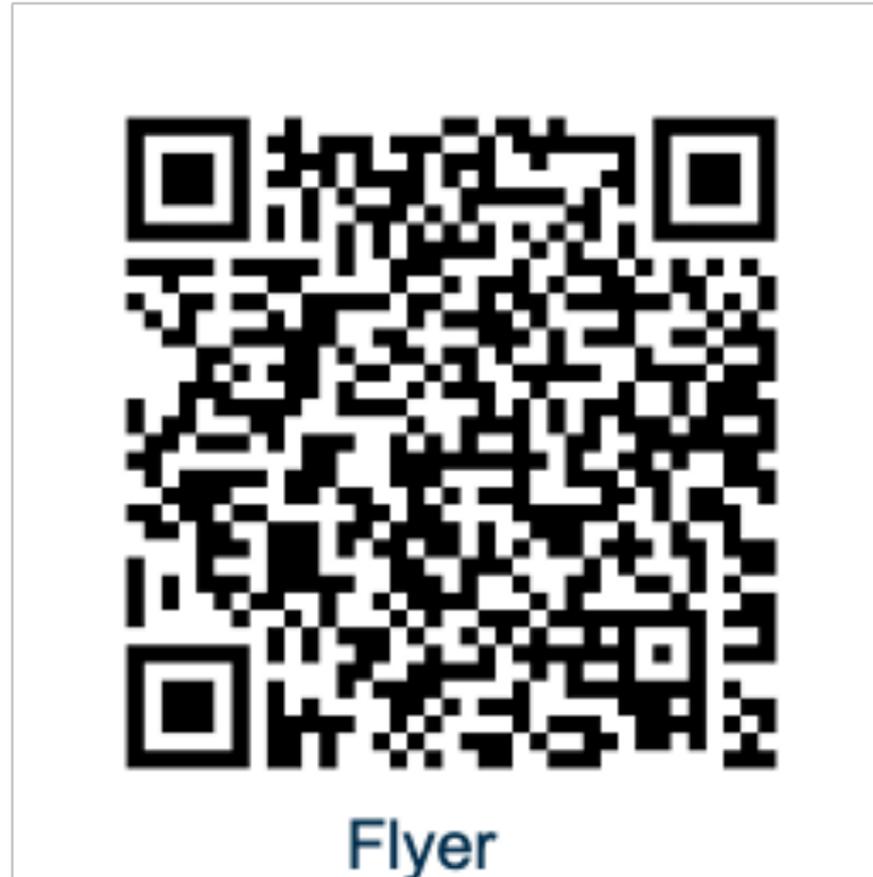


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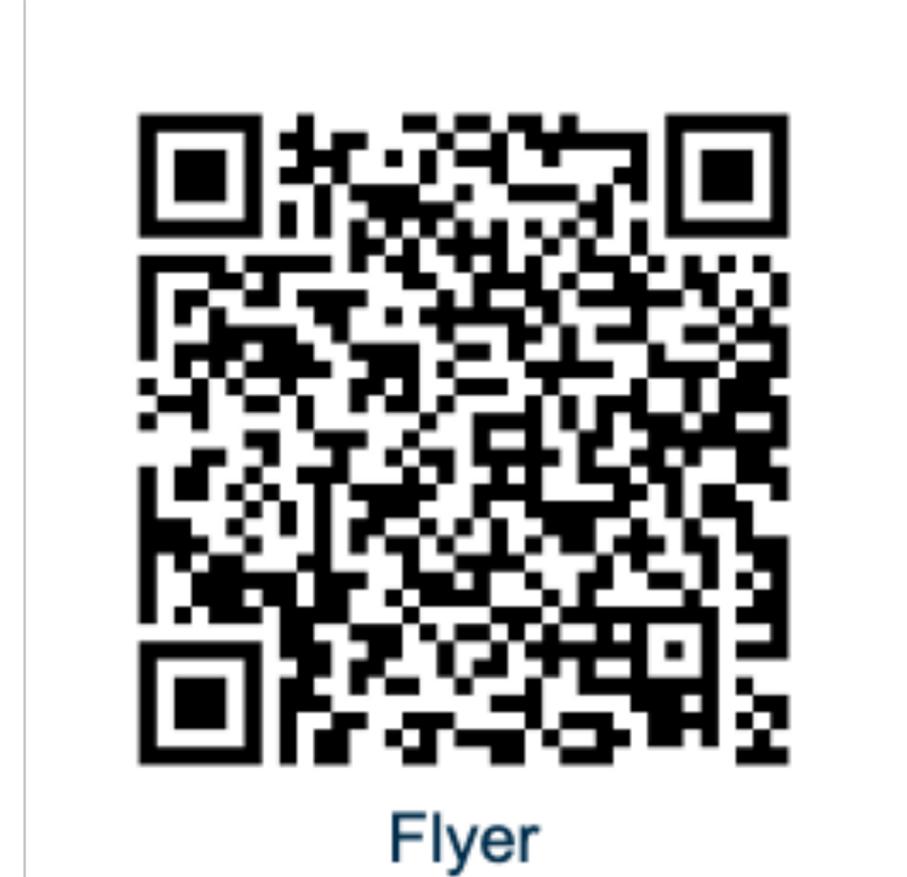
# Further Information



Website  
PhD student council



Flyer  
PhD student council



Flyer  
How to PhD (physics)

# What can you do?

- Join our get-together each semester: talk about current & future projects, exchange ideas, vote on new representatives, etc.
- Contact us ([physik-doktoranden-vorstand@lists.kit.edu](mailto:physik-doktoranden-vorstand@lists.kit.edu)) if:
  - you want to **help** with ongoing projects
  - you want to **become part** of our council
  - you have **more ideas** to improve PhD life
  - at the Department of Physics
  - you simply want to chat :)

# How to end your PhD

1. Finish your **thesis** :)
2. Officially **apply** for [admission to the Doctoral Examination and Opening of the Doctoral Procedure](#) (Docata portal, then hand it in to the Dean's office)
3. **Oral Exam**: There are 20 minutes to present your (most important) work, then 50 minutes of questions by your PhD Commission
4. **Publish** your dissertation within one year after the exam



# Thanks for coming and have fun!