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Towards Timely Graduation – A New Operating Model for Thesis Supervision in the Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering

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Abstract

Delayed graduation is a persistent challenge in higher education, and the thesis is often a major contributing factor because it requires independent work, time management, academic and technical writing, and collaboration with supervisors and external clients. In the Degree Programme in Electrical and Automation Engineering at Häme University of Applied Sciences, the prolonged thesis process was identified as a key reason for delayed graduation. This development project aimed to streamline the thesis process and support timely graduation by redesigning supervision. The process was divided into clear, manageable phases with a shared schedule, while supervisors were provided with a pre-planned timetable and message templates for key supervision stages. The revised model was designed not only to support students, but also to harmonize supervisory practices, systematize the process, and make supervisors' work more efficient. Experiences of the model were positive. Students benefited from a clearer structure, smaller work packages, predictable scheduling, and peer support through group supervision, which lowered the threshold for starting the thesis and supported progress. Supervisors found the model clearer and more efficient because shared structures, group supervision, and pre-scheduled communication reduced repetitive individual guidance. The thesis coordinator also benefited from easier monitoring and fewer student-specific queries. The development work was reflected in improved graduation outcomes, and by the end of 2025 the degree programme had achieved a record number of graduates. The results suggest that phased and scheduled thesis supervision provides a practical model for supporting timely graduation and systematizing supervision in technical higher education.

Keywords: Thesis, Phased Supervision, Systematization of the Supervision Process, Group Supervision, Engineering Higher Education