

This text is a translation of the "*Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré à l'EPFL*" (updated version as of 11th September 2019). Only the French version has legal validity.

Ordinance on the doctorate conferred by the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne

(Ordinance on the doctorate at EPFL)¹

of 26th January 1998 (status as at 1st September 2019)

The Direction of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL),

based on Art. 3, para. 1, point b, of the *Ordonnance du Conseil des EPF sur les écoles polytechniques fédérales de Zurich et de Lausanne* of 13th November 2003^{2,3},

hereby adopts the following:

Section 1 General provisions

Art. 1 Scope of application

- 1 The present ordinance defines the conditions, procedure and competent authorities for doctoral degrees conferred by the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).
- 2 The tasks of the Vice President for Education⁴ may be delegated to the Dean responsible for doctoral training, with the exception of those tasks referred to in Art. 15, para. 4; Art. 16, para. 1; and Art. 18, para. 3.⁵
- 3 The terms and conditions are laid out in the Directives issued by the EPFL Direction.⁶

¹ Abbreviated title introduced by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO**2008** 3733).

² SR **414.110.37**

³ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

⁴ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 31st July 2019, in force since 1st September 2019 (AS **2019** 2485/RO **2019** 2485). Due account has been taken of this amendment throughout the text.

⁵ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

⁶ Introduced by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

Art. 2⁷ Doctorates

- 1 EPFL confers the title of Doctor of Sciences (*dr ès sc* or PhD), which attests that the holder has submitted a personal and original piece of scientific research work, has successfully completed a program of doctoral study (Art. 3, para. 3) and is consequently qualified to engage in high-level scientific research work.
- 2 EPFL publishes the names of those persons to whom it awards the title of doctor.
- 3 The doctoral titles conferred by EPFL in cases where the doctoral thesis was jointly supervised with other institutions are governed by specific agreements.
- 4 Honorary Doctors receive the title of Doctor, followed by the term “*honoris causa*” (h.c.) (Art. 23).

Art. 3⁸ Doctoral program and doctoral study

- 1 Doctoral training is carried out within the framework of a doctoral program.
- 2 A committee oversees each program. This committee is composed of doctoral student representatives, the Program Director, and at least two other EPFL professors. The Program Director presides. The members are appointed by the Vice President for Education.
- 3 In their study rules and regulations, the program committees define study plans which allocate ECTS credits (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) to assessed learning outcomes.

Art. 3a⁹

Section 2 Enrolment for doctoral degree and thesis preparation¹⁰

Art. 4¹¹ Applicants

The following may apply for admission to doctoral study:

- a. holders of a diploma or Master's degree awarded by a Swiss *Ecole polytechnique fédérale (EPF/ETH)*;

⁷ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

⁸ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

⁹ Introduced by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

Abrogated by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force from 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

¹⁰ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

¹¹ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

- b. holders of a study diploma in physical or natural sciences awarded by a Swiss university, which entitles the holder to begin a doctoral thesis in this institution without a preliminary examination;
- c. holders of a university diploma considered equivalent to an EPF (ETH) Master's degree;
- d. holders of other university diplomas recognised by EPFL.

Art. 5¹² Admission to doctoral studies

- 1 The applicant submits a written application for admission to an EPFL doctoral program to the Program Director, enclosing all supporting documents required for the completion of his/her application.¹³
- 2 Based on the committee's preliminary assessment, the Program Director decides on conditional or unconditional admission (para. 5).¹⁴
- 3 The Program Director considers the level of excellence of the applicant and the availability of supervisory and logistical resources necessary for the preparation of the thesis at EPFL.
- 4 Any applicant who has already completed a thesis in a similar or related discipline to that envisaged will not be admitted as a doctoral candidate at EPFL. Any applicant who has previously abandoned or failed to complete a thesis in a similar or related discipline to that envisaged may only be admitted as a doctoral candidate at EPFL with the special authorisation of the Vice President for Education. Art. 17 is reserved.
- 5 Those applicants referred to in Art. 4, point d, must demonstrate that their knowledge corresponds to that required for an EPF (ETH) Master's degree. To this end, the Program Director stipulates the conditions individual applicants must fulfil before sitting the candidacy examination. Should an applicant fail to meet these conditions within the required time period, he/she will be permanently excluded from the doctoral program.¹⁵
- 6 Once the application for admission has been accepted, the applicant is authorised to enrol for the first year of doctoral study.¹⁶

Art. 6¹⁷ Candidacy Examination

- 1 All doctoral candidates must take a candidacy examination at the end of the first year of their doctoral studies.
- 2 The objective of this examination is to confirm the candidate's aptitude to successfully carry out independent research work and write a doctoral thesis. The terms of this examination are defined in the doctoral program rules and regulations.

¹² Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

¹³ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

¹⁴ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

¹⁵ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

¹⁶ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

¹⁷ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733). See also the transitional provisions for these terms at the end of the present text.

- 3 In case of failure, the examination may be retaken once.

Art. 7¹⁸ Research Plan

- 1 The candidate will draft a research plan specifying the content of the thesis, the research method and a schedule for the work that he/she proposes to undertake.¹⁹
- 2 The candidate will draft the research plan within a period of twelve months from his/her official enrolment date.²⁰
- 3 The candidate will write the research plan in one of the official Swiss languages or in English, in agreement with his/her future Thesis Director.
- 4 (removed)²¹

Art. 8²² Acceptance for thesis preparation

- 1 Candidates admitted for the preparation of a thesis will have:
- a. ²³passed the candidacy examination;
 - a^(bis) ²⁴obtained the agreement of a Thesis Director to supervise their doctorate;
 - b. drafted a research plan accepted by the Thesis Director and approved by the Program Director;
 - c. ²⁵obtained the credits required according to the doctoral study plan for the first year of doctoral study.
- 2 Based on the proposal from the Program Director, the Vice President for Education decides whether to accept the candidate for admission to thesis preparation and notifies the candidate of this decision.

Section 3 Doctoral thesis

Art. 9 Subject of thesis

- 1 The subject of the thesis lies within a particular scientific area taught or researched at EPFL.
- 2 As a general rule, the subject must allow for the thesis to be completed within a four-year period from the candidate's official enrolment date, with a minimum required

¹⁸ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

¹⁹ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

²⁰ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

²¹ Abrogated by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, effective as of 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

²² Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

²³ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

²⁴ Introduced by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

²⁵ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

period prior to the oral examination (Art. 15) of two years.²⁶

Art. 10²⁷ Thesis supervision

- 1 Work is supervised and directed by a Thesis Director. The Thesis Director is generally an EPFL professor or senior scientist (MER, *maître d'enseignement et de recherche*). The Vice President for Education may authorise special derogations.
- 2 The Vice President for Education may authorise thesis work to be supervised by two Thesis Directors. Only one of these Thesis Directors, based at EPFL, is responsible for decisions concerning the progress of the thesis vis-à-vis the candidate and EPFL.
- 3 Each year, the candidate submits a report to the Thesis Director on the state of progress of his/her work. The Thesis Director gives the candidate his opinion in writing and submits a report to the Program Director within one month.
- 4 If the progress of the work or the candidate's knowledge is considered inadequate, the Vice President for Education:
 - a. notifies the candidate of the conditions to be fulfilled and stipulates a deadline within which this must be achieved;
 - b. excludes the candidate from doctoral studies.
- 5 The Thesis Director may require that the candidate attend certain relevant courses.

Art. 11 Thesis preparation

- 1 The thesis must be prepared at EPFL or in a research establishment in the ETH domain.
- 2 The Program Director may authorise research work to be conducted outside the ETH domain, provided that the Thesis Director has given his/her approval and that the candidate has full access to the necessary facilities.²⁸

Art. 12²⁹ Disagreements and substitutions during thesis preparation

- 1 The Program Director endeavours to eliminate any serious differences of opinion between the candidate and the Thesis Director. If no agreement can be reached, the matter is resolved by the Vice President for Education.
- 2 The Program Director ensures, as far as possible, that the candidate is able to continue his/her thesis in the event that the Thesis Director should be unable to perform his/her duties.

Art. 13³⁰ Thesis language

- 1 The candidate writes his/her thesis in one of the official Swiss languages or in English, in agreement with the Thesis Director.

²⁶ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

²⁷ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

²⁸ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

²⁹ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

³⁰ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

- 2 Upon presentation of a written request by the candidate, supported by the Thesis Director, the Vice President for Education may authorise the candidate to write his/her thesis in another language.
- 3 The candidate writes a summary of his/her thesis in one of the official Swiss languages and in English.

Section 4 Awarding a doctorate

Art. 14³¹ Thesis jury

The jury appointed by the Vice President for Education is comprised of:

- a. The Program Director or his/her deputy, who presides over the jury;
- b. the Thesis Director;
- c. one internal EPFL examiner and two external examiners; the Vice President for Education may grant a special dispensation if the thesis concerns more than two fields of study.

Art. 15 Thesis assessment and oral examination

- 1 The Thesis Director and the examiners each draw up a report in which they give their opinion of the thesis.
- 2 The candidate undergoes an oral examination by the jury concerning the thesis and its scientific context.³²
- 3 The doctoral thesis and the oral examination are classed as a “pass”, “conditional pass”, or “fail” by the jury.
- 4 A “conditional pass” signifies that significant additional work is required regarding the form or the content of the thesis, the duration of which must not exceed six months. The Vice President for Education decides whether or not the conditions stipulated by the jury should be accepted.³³

Art. 16 Awarding of doctoral title

- 1 Based on the jury's proposal, the Vice President for Education decides whether or not the candidate should be awarded the doctoral degree.³⁴
- 2 Candidates who have passed the oral examination and whose thesis has been accepted are required to present their thesis at a public defence.³⁵
- 3 The public defence must take place within a period of six months following the oral

³¹ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

³² Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

³³ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

³⁴ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 1st April 2002, in force since 1st April 2002 (AS **2002** 2541/RO **2002** 2541).

³⁵ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

examination at the latest.

- 4 The candidate may only obtain the doctoral title when the decision has been made to award him/her the degree, he/she has submitted the original copy of his/her thesis to EPFL in the required form (taking into account any proposals made by the jury), and the public defence has taken place.³⁶

Art. 17³⁷ Second attempt

In the event of failure in the oral examination, the candidate may repeat the oral examination, revise his/her thesis, or present a new thesis, within the period of time stipulated by the Vice President for Education, based on the jury's proposal.

Art. 18³⁸ Doctoral diploma

- 1 The doctoral diploma states the name, date and place of birth of the recipient, the academic title awarded, the title of the thesis and the date of the public defence.³⁹
- 2 It also states the name of the successfully completed EPFL doctoral program.⁴⁰
- 3 It is issued on behalf of EPFL and bears the signatures of the President, Vice President for Education, and Thesis Director, and the official stamp of EPFL.

Art. 19⁴¹ Publication

The thesis accepted by the jury is published *in extenso*. The terms and conditions applicable are specified in the Directives.

Art. 20⁴² Enrolment fee

The doctoral candidate is required to pay the enrolment fee stipulated in the ordinance of 31st May 1995 concerning enrolment fees in the ETH domain⁴³.

Section 5 Copyright⁴⁴

Art. 21 Copyright pertaining to the thesis

³⁶ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

³⁷ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 1st April 2002, in force since 1st April 2002 (AS **2002** 2541/RO **2002** 2541).

³⁸ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 1st April 2002, in force since 1st April 2002 (AS **2002** 2541/RO **2002** 2541).

³⁹ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

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⁴² Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 31st July 2019, in force since 1st September 2019 (AS **2019** 2485/RO **2019** 2485).

⁴³ RS/SR **414.131.7**

⁴⁴ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907).

- 1 The writer of the thesis is considered its author within the meaning of copyright legislation. Subject to para. 2 below, the writer retains all rights relating to copyright.
- 2 With the non-profit-making purpose of making known the content of the thesis, EPFL has the non-exclusive right to publish and use all or part of the thesis if it has supported the author by financing his/her work or placing logistical resources at his/her disposal.⁴⁵

Art. 22⁴⁶ Other intangible assets

The rights relating to intangible assets created within the context of the thesis, other than those referred to under Art. 21 above, are governed by the Ordinance of the ETH Board of 9th July 2014 concerning intangible assets in the ETH domain⁴⁷.

Section 6 Honorary doctorate

Art. 23⁴⁸

The title of doctor *honoris causa* is conferred in accordance with Art. 20, para. 2, of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology of 4th October 1991⁴⁹, based on proposals made by the School Deans' Conference.

Section 7 Entry into force

Art. 24 The present Ordinance entered into force on 1st February 1998.

Transitional provisions ensuing from the amendment of 26th September 2005⁵⁰:

- 1 The deadlines stipulated in the previous legislation remain applicable to candidates enrolled before 1st November 2005, insofar as they are to their advantage.
- 2 Art. 21, para. 2, is applicable to doctoral candidates accepted for admission as of 1st November 2005.

Transitional provision ensuing from the amendment of 2nd June 2008⁵¹:

Art. 6 does not apply to doctoral candidates enrolled prior to the entry into force of the amendment of 2nd June 2008.

⁴⁵ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 26th September 2005, in force since 1st November 2005 (AS **2005** 4907/RO **2005** 4907). See also the transitional provisions for these terms at the end of the present text.

⁴⁶ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 31st July 2019, in force since 1st September 2019 (AS **2019** 2485/RO **2019** 2485).

⁴⁷ RS/SR **414.172**

⁴⁸ Amended by No. I of the *Ordonnance sur le doctorat délivré par l'Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne* of 2nd June 2008, in force since 1st September 2008 (AS **2008** 3733/RO **2008** 3733).

⁴⁹ RS/SR **414.110**

⁵⁰ AS/RO **2005** 4907

⁵¹ AS/RO **2008** 3733

