

Directive concerning the evaluation and recognition of teaching at the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne

LEX 2.5.1

7th January 2004, status as at 25th January 2021

The Direction of the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne,
based on Art. 10a of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology¹ of 4th October
([RS 414.110](#)),
based on Art. 3 para. 1, letter b, of the *Ordonnance sur l'EPFZ et l'EPFL* of 13th November 2003
([RS 414.110.37](#)),
hereby adopts the following:

Preamble

EPFL has a dual mission. It should, on the one hand, be an internationally acknowledged topranking research centre and, on the other hand, an educational institution that trains top-level engineers, scientists and architects, innovators capable of assuming senior positions and responding to the new needs of society.

Teaching has always been and remains a priority of our institution. This priority applies at all levels (Special Mathematics Course, Bachelor, Master, doctoral studies, continuing education).

Article 1 Objectives

The present directive has three main objectives:

- recognise the commitment and performance of teaching staff;
- offer assessment indicators for appointments, promotions and allocation of resources;
- prescribe measures allowing any problems regarding teaching quality to be detected and solutions to be found.

Article 2 Principal measures

¹ The recognition of teaching performance at EPFL is based on three complementary actions:

- the clarification of responsibilities regarding teaching quality;
- the determination of teaching evaluation procedures;
- the creation of a teaching portfolio for each teaching staff member.

² These measures recognise teaching and promote its quality. The creation of the teaching portfolio must notably allow an improvement in teaching quality thanks to the awareness of its importance and value.

Article 3 Responsibilities

¹ The EPFL Direction allocates the means necessary for the development of teaching quality. It ensures that teaching quality is taken into account when important decisions are made, and particularly for appointments, promotions, evaluation of teaching staff or resource allocation.

¹ FIT Act: Art. 10a Quality assurance. The FITs shall review the quality of teaching, research and services at regularly intervals in accordance with the legislation on support for universities; they are responsible for long-term quality assurance.

² Each School or College distributes resources to the sections and other bodies responsible for courses in accordance with their needs. The Associate Vice Presidency for Education allocates resources, for a limited period (1 to 2 years), to innovation and the development of pedagogical resources.

³ The Associate Vice Presidency for Education manages, together with the Section Directors, the entire teaching evaluation and recognition process.

⁴ Each Section Director ensures that the study plan complies with educational objectives and that teaching loads are appropriately allocated. They ensure that the section's courses are of good quality. They manage teaching evaluation and follow-up with teaching staff. They are assisted in these tasks by IS-Academia and the Teaching Commission.

⁵ Each teaching staff member is responsible for ensuring that their course is of good quality, developing their own pedagogical skills and those of their team (assistants). They develop the appropriate pedagogical supports, equipment and environment.

⁶ [Teaching Support Center](#) (hereinafter CAPE) offers skills and support for all measures aimed at improving teaching quality.

Article 4 Teaching evaluation

¹ The Section Director and Teaching Commission members ensure that educational objectives are clear, appropriate and in line with educational policy, and that the study plan, course content and teaching methods are well-balanced and adapted to the objectives. They rely particularly on the opinion of peers, former students and professional circles.

² Teaching staff are strongly encouraged to have regular discussions with their students and the Class Delegate in particular in order to obtain regular feedback regarding their teaching.

³ Teaching evaluation is based on three complementary procedures:

- an indicative feedback to all teaching staff members each semester, automatically carried out by IS-Academia, but under the responsibility of the Section Director;
- an in-depth evaluation, under the responsibility of the Section Director;
- an evaluation and follow-up service by CAPE, with personal advice, at the request of the teaching staff member.

Article 5 Indicative feedback

¹ The indicative feedback is a brief, rapid, overall feedback, aimed at giving an initial indication of teaching quality as perceived by students. It focuses on the teaching and not on the teacher. A course taught by several persons therefore only gets feedback once.

² The indicative feedback is done electronically for each course during approximately the 10th week of each semester. All students enrolled for a course are invited to reply to a single question and are given space for any remarks they may wish to make.

³ The results for a course are transmitted electronically (in the form of a histogram) to the teaching staff and Section Directors concerned, the School Direction and are discussed at the Section Teaching Commission in the presence of student representatives.

⁴ Teaching staff present about, and discuss the results with the students soon after the feedback results are available.

⁵ The Section Director informs each teaching staff member in writing regarding the situation of their course. He commends cases of merit within the Section.

Article 6 In-depth evaluation

¹ The Section Director can organise in-depth evaluation on a course before the end of the semester, and must do so in the following cases:

- When the rating for a course on the indicative feedback is insufficient;

- Where students make a justified request;
- For all new courses;
- All course that have a changed teacher;
- Any course which has not had an in-depth evaluation in the previous five years.

² The section draws up a questionnaire adapted to the course, with the help of the teaching staff member(s) concerned and, if necessary, of the Class Delegate and/or CAPE. This questionnaire is distributed to the students enrolled on the course.

³ For in-depth evaluation due to an insufficient rating on the indicative feedback, the Section Director discusses the results of the in-depth evaluation with the teaching staff member. Together they try to find the origin of the issue and ways of addressing it. The Section Director may recommend that the teaching staff member should discuss the results and followup of the evaluation with CAPE.

⁴ If they get the results in time, the teaching staff member informs the students of the measures that have been taken.

⁵ During the autumn semester, the Section Director sends to the Associate Vice President for Education an annual report concerning courses that have required in-depth evaluation due to insufficient indicative feedback in the previous academic year, and the corrective measures proposed.

⁶ In cases of repeated and unresolved inadequacy, the Section Director, after consulting, where appropriate, the Directors of the receiving Sections, passes the matter to the Associate Vice President for Education and the School Dean who will take the appropriate measures.

Article 7 CAPE evaluation and follow-up service

Any teaching staff member may request confidential evaluation and follow-up by CAPE, regardless of the results of their indicative feedback:

- the CAPE adviser guarantees the confidentiality of the results to the teaching staff member. The evaluations and follow-up are carried out solely for the purposes of diagnosing any issues, providing advice and seeking solutions leading to improvement;
- the evaluation is based on a questionnaire and, if desired, on direct observation of the teaching staff member;
- the evaluation and follow-up service includes an analysis of the results and concrete proposals for improvement that are discussed with the teaching staff member;
- it is up to the teaching staff member to benefit from the evaluation and follow-up service, and use the results to their advantage as they wish.

Article 8 Emergency measure

¹ When students make a justified request for a particular course to be improved as a matter of urgency, the Class Delegate passes this request on to the teaching staff member, who may propose changes and request an evaluation and follow-up by CAPE.

² If the teaching staff member refuses to discuss the matter, the Class Delegate asks the Section Director to resolve the problem. If the teaching staff member refuses to collaborate, the case is passed on to the School Dean and the Associate Vice President for Education.

Article 9 Evaluation of examinations

¹ The Section Director does a comparative analysis of examination marks by class, by subject and by course. In the event of significant disparities, he seeks their origin and takes the necessary measures to resolve them.

² Each teaching staff member receives the necessary information to compare their marks and those that other teaching staff members have given to the same class.

³ On a more global basis, the Section Directors' Conference (CDS) analyses the examination failure rates of the different sections each year. Cases of significant disparities are discussed and clarified. If necessary, the Vice-President for Education takes the necessary measures.

Article 10 Teaching portfolio

¹ For each appointment, contract renewal and promotion, the candidate must present a teaching portfolio.

² The teaching portfolio allows each teaching staff member to exhibit their teaching experience and pedagogic skills, describe their teaching concept and projects and state their various commitments in favour of teaching.

³ The non-exhaustive list below identifies important criteria for the assessment of the quality of teaching. The teaching portfolio should contain reference to whichever elements are most relevant to the courses taught by a teacher (detailed in appendix):

- Is there a clear focus on student learning?
- Is teaching well aligned with the overall goals of the program and with other courses in the program?
- What are the approaches used to improve the quality of teaching over time?

⁴ The teaching staff member's portfolio comprises in particular:

- a detailed description of their courses and teaching contributions with the teaching objectives pursued and the underlying pedagogy. The Section Director signs it to confirm that he has taken note of its content;
- the results of in-depth evaluations for the entire period covered by the portfolio;
- other sources of information which the teacher wishes to present to support the case that they meet the evaluation criteria (see appendix);
- the teaching staff member's comments regarding the evaluations and their courses;
- a letter of reference from the Section Director;
- their participation in all types of pedagogic activities (commissions, seminars, research, projects, etc.);
- a letter of reference from the Director of the Doctoral Programme attesting to the candidate's contributions to doctoral education. The contribution shall be reviewed in terms of the candidate's qualities as a thesis supervisor, participation in teaching doctoral courses, commitment as a mentor, involvement as a member of the doctoral programme committee, as well as participation in scientific and social activities related to doctoral training.

Article 11 Sphere of application

¹ The evaluation measures defined in the present directive are applicable to Bachelor and Master courses and the Special Mathematics Course (CMS). In the latter case, the provisions concerning the Section Director apply by analogy to the CMS Director.

² For the evaluation of Doctoral School and Continuing Education courses, the Associate Vice President for Post-Graduate Education may define different measures and procedures, providing that these have been submitted to the EPFL Direction for approval in advance.

Article 12 Compliance with directive

The Associate Vice President for Education ensures that the present directive is complied with.

Article 13 Entry into force

The present directive entered into force on 7th January 2004, and was revised on 25th January 2021 (version 3.0).

On behalf of the EPFL Direction:

President:
Martin Vetterli

Director of Legal Affairs:
Françoise Chardonens

Appendix

I. Details of the criteria mentioned in Art. 10.3 of the Directive:

Is there a clear focus on student learning?

- a. Have clear student learning goals been identified?
- b. Is the content material of the course appropriately challenging?
- c. What student activities and assessments have been devised by the teacher to address these learning goals?

Is teaching well aligned with the overall goals of the program and with other courses in the program?

- d. Has teaching a significant impact within their section, within EPFL, or within the wider community?
- e. Has the teacher shown a willingness to teach foundation-level courses, if required?

What are the approaches used to improve the quality of teaching over time?

- f. What different sources of information (see appendix II, below) have been used to evaluate the quality of teaching?
- g. Is the teacher exchanging with peers, potential employers or former students regarding learning outcomes?
- h. Is the teacher exchanging with peers (within the school or outside) regarding contents and teaching approaches?

II. Other sources of evidence that may be included in a teaching portfolio

Additional sources of evidence included by teachers in portfolio may include the following:

- a review of the learning objectives of the course and their relationship with those of other courses and of the programme as a whole
- feedback from peers on the quality of classes, exercises, examination material or on student results
- feedback from former students
- performance of recent cohorts of students in achieving the learning outcomes of the course
- course evaluations carried out by CAPE
- other documents selected by the teaching staff member, such as a diploma for best teacher

This list is non-exhaustive. The inclusion of such additional sources of information is at the discretion of the teacher.