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Ordinance on the evaluation of Bachelor and Master studies at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (Ordinance on study evaluation at EPFL)

of 30th June 2015 (status as at 1st September 2023)

The Direction of the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL), based on Art. 3, par. 1, letter b, of the ordonnance sur l'EPFZ et l'EPFL of 13th November 2003¹, hereby adopts the following:

Chapter 1 General provisions

Section 1 Subject and sphere of application

Art. 1 Subject

This Ordinance lays down the basic rules of study evaluation at EPFL.

Art. 2 Sphere of application

¹ This Ordinance applies to EPFL Bachelor and Master studies.

² Insofar as no special rules have been enacted by the EPFL Direction, Arts 8, 10, 12, 14, 15 and 18 to 20 also apply to:

- a. admission examinations;
- b. Special Mathematics Course (CMS) examinations;
- c. remedial Review Course ("Mise à niveau-MAN") examinations;
- d. doctoral examinations;
- e. doctoral programme examinations;
- f. continuing education and postgraduate education examinations.

Section 2 General definitions

Art. 3 Branch of study

¹ A branch is a teaching subject on which one or several tests are conducted.

RO 2015 2525

¹ RS 414.110.37

² A “semester branch” is a branch for which examinations take place during the teaching period.

³ A “session branch” is a branch for which examinations take place during the examination session. It may include tests conducted during the teaching period.

⁴ A semester branch may take the form of an internship.

Art. 4 Credits and coefficients

Each branch carries a number of ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits or, for the Foundation Year, a coefficient, indicating its weighting as part of the study programme.

Section 3 Provisions applicable to both Bachelor and Master studies

Art. 5 Study plans and implementing regulations

Study plans and implementing regulations are enacted for each study programme in each field, defining in particular:

- a. the semester branches and session branches;
- b. the semester or session during which related examinations may be taken;
- c. the form of the session examination (written or oral);
- d. the composition of the blocks and groups of branches;
- e. the weighting factors or credits allocated to each branch;
- f. the number of credits or coefficient to be acquired in each block and group;
- g. the conditions applicable to the prerequisites (Art. 25);
- h. the specific pass requirements;
- i. the in-depth, specialised or interdisciplinary studies;
- j. any transitional regimes applicable to amendments made to study plans and implementing regulations.

Art. 6 Blocks and groups of branches

¹ Branches are combined into a block or group. Each branch can only be part of one block or one group. A block may consist of a single branch.

² A pass is considered to have been obtained for a block:

- a. when the total number of credits acquired per branch is equal to or higher than the number required, or
- b. when the total credits acquired for the branches for which examinations have been taken reach the number required, and the average for the block (Art. 8, par. 5) is equal to 4.00 or above; in this case, the total number of

credits for the branches for which examinations have been taken is acquired.²

³ A pass is considered to have been obtained for a group when the credits for the branches comprising it have been accumulated up to the number required; no compensation is possible between the marks for the various branches comprising the group.³

Art. 7 Course descriptions

The course descriptions published specify in particular the following, for each branch:

- a. learning outcomes;
- b. brief description of the subject;
- c. tests making up the final grade, including their weighting and format;
- d. any prerequisites (Art. 25);
- e. teaching language.

Art. 8 Grading and marking

¹ A mark ranging from 1.00 to 6.00 is awarded for tests. Marks lower than 4.00 denote failure. A mark of 0 is allocated if a student fails to attend the test, to answer any of the questions or to meet deadlines.

² The final mark for a branch is made up of the relevant examination marks, to the quarter-mark. If this is lower than 1.00, the branch is considered as being not acquired and graded NA. An NA grade is considered as an attempted pass.

³ The implementing regulations may foresee that a branch is marked with grades R (*réussi*) for pass or E (*échec*) for failure.

⁴ If the branch is repeated, the mark considered is that of the second attempt.

⁵ Averages are calculated by weighting each final numerical mark for a branch by its coefficient or number of credits, to the hundredth place. The NA and E grades preclude obtaining an average except in cases referred to in Art. 6 par. 2 letter b, and 3.

Art. 9 Organisation of examination sessions, tests and enrolment for branches

¹ Two examination sessions are organised per academic year. They take place between semesters.

² The deadlines to enrol for a branch, withdrawal deadlines, times and dates for the examinations, as well as other procedures, are notified to the students.

³ Upon expiry of the deadlines, branch enrolments and withdrawals are final.

² Amended in accordance with Ch. 1 of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 20th August 2019, in force since 15th September 2019 (RO 2019 2641).

³ Amended in accordance with Ch. 1 of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 20th August 2019, in force since 15th September 2019 (RO 2019 2641).

⁴ If a student repeats a branch, the latter is governed by the provisions in force at the time of repetition, unless otherwise provided by EPFL.

Art. 10 Inability to sit an examination

¹ Students invoking a ground for inability to sit an examination must notify EPFL as soon as this reason occurs.

² Moreover, they should submit the necessary supporting documents within three days at the latest following the occurrence of the grounds for inability to attend. Supporting documents mean namely a medical certificate or a certificate of a legal obligation to serve.

³ Invoking grounds for inability after sitting the examination does not justify the cancellation of a mark.

Art. 11 Language used for tests

¹ The language used for tests is the same as that used for the teaching of the particular branch.

² Students are entitled to give answers in French in tests prepared in English. Subject to a written request, the teaching staff member may authorise students to give answers in English in tests prepared in French.

Art. 12 Students with disabilities

¹ If so requested at the beginning of the academic year by a candidate with disabilities, EPFL organises an adapted test procedure and decides on the use of any necessary special means or personal assistance.

² The objectives of the test must be met.

Art. 13 Teaching staff duties

¹ Teaching staff members perform the following tasks in particular:

- a. provide the necessary information concerning their teaching subjects to be published in the course description;
- b. inform the students, if necessary, of the syllabus for the subjects and test procedure;
- c. supervise the tests;
- d. take notes concerning each oral test, which serve as a basis for providing, if necessary, a position statement to the conference for the ratification of examination results or to the appeal authorities;⁴
- e. allocate marks for tests, as well as the final mark for the branch;
- f. keep the written tests and notes taken during oral tests for a period of six months following completion of the relevant programme (Chaps. 2 to 4);

⁴ Amended in accordance with Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO **2023** 447).

in the event of appeal, this time limit is extended until the procedure is completed.

² If a teaching staff member is prevented from performing his/her duties, the Section Director appoints a substitute.

Art. 14 Observer

¹ An observer appointed by the Section Director attends oral tests held during an examination session in order to ensure that they are conducted correctly.

² For each candidate, the observer takes notes on the test procedure and files these in accordance with Art. 13, par. 1, letter f.

Art. 15 Consultation of test scripts

Students may consult their test scripts within 6 months following notification of test results.

Art. 16 Evaluation committees

Evaluation committees may be set up for semester branches. In addition to the teaching staff member and an expert, evaluation committees may include assistants and lecturers who have participated in teaching activities, and other professors.

Art. 17 Conference for ratification of examination results

¹ The conference for ratification of examination results is held at the end of each session. It is composed of the Vice President for Academic Affairs or his/her representative as the chairperson, the Section Director and the Academic Registrar. Members of the conference for ratification of examination results may be represented by their substitutes.⁵

² The conference for ratification of examination results rules on specific cases in accordance with legal provisions.

Art. 18⁶ Fraudulent behaviour

The sanctions applicable to fraudulent behaviour in the control of studies are governed by the *Ordonnance de l'École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne du 2 août 2021 sur les mesures disciplinaires*⁷.

⁵ Amended in accordance with Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO 2023 447).

⁶ Amended in accordance with art. 16 of the *Ordonnance de l'EPFL du 2 août 2021 sur les mesures disciplinaires*, in force since 1st November 2021 (RO 2021 482).

⁷ RS 414.138.2

Art. 19 Notification of results and announcements

¹ The decision as to whether they have passed or failed a study programme is notified to students.

² The decision indicates the marks obtained and credits acquired.

³ Notification of decisions and general announcements are communicated by email or by post.

Art. 20 Request for re-evaluation and administrative appeal

¹ The decision may form the subject of a request for re-evaluation within 10 days following its notification. Art. 63, par. 1, 3 and 4, of the Federal Act on Administrative Procedure of 20th December 1968⁸ apply.

² It may also form the subject of an administrative appeal submitted to the ETH Internal Appeals Committee within 30 days following its notification.

Chapter 2 Foundation year examinations**Art. 21** Pass requirements

¹ Students who, at the end of the first semester of the Foundation Year and related examination session, achieve a weighted average (Art. 8, par. 5) of at least 3.50 for the first block as defined under the implementing regulations, are admitted to the second semester of the programme.

² In accordance with the study plan and implementing regulations, in order to pass the Foundation Year, students must have:

- a. taken the examinations in all the branches, and
- b. achieved an overall average of 4.00 or above in each block and, if applicable, the coefficients required in a group of branches.

Art. 22 Failure and exclusion

¹ At Foundation Year level, the following amount to failure:

- a. failure to achieve a weighted average of at least 3.50 for the first block at the end of the first semester and related examination session;
- b. failure to achieve a weighted average of at least 4.00 per block or failure to achieve the required number of coefficients in a group, at the end of the Foundation Year, or
- c. failure to take the examinations in all the branches at the end of the Foundation Year, subject to Art. 23, par. 4.

² Students making a first attempt at the Foundation Year, who find themselves in the situation referred to in Art. 1 letter a, must take the remedial EPFL Review Course in the second semester.

⁸ RS 172.021

³ Failure or lack of success in the foundation year of another university of applied sciences of comparable level is equivalent to failure in the EPFL Foundation Year if the majority of branches are considered similar by EPFL.

⁴ A second failure at Foundation Year level or non-compliance with the maximum duration of two years to complete this programme is equivalent to final failure.

⁵ Failure to achieve a weighted average of at least 4.00 at the end of the Review Course or non-compliance with the obligation to follow the latter are grounds for permanent exclusion from any Bachelor course at EPFL.

Art. 23 Second attempt

¹ Students failing in their first attempt according to Art. 22 par. 1 letters b and c, or who achieve an average of at least 4.00 in the Review Course, are admitted for a second time to the first semester of the Foundation Year of the following academic year.

^{1bis} Students who fail the second semester of the Foundation Year after having successfully passed the Review Course may attempt the second semester the following year by way of derogation from Art. 20, par. 4 of this Ordinance and from Art. 7, par. 3 of the Ordinance on studies at EPFL of 14th June 2004 (*Ordonnance sur la formation à l'EPFL*)^{9,10}

² The branches in a successfully passed block or group (Art. 21, par. 2, letter b) remain valid and may not be repeated.

³ Repeating other unsuccessful branches is mandatory. Repeating successful branches is optional, except for students in the situation referred to in Art. 22, par. 1, letter a, for whom the first semester is mandatory. However, the implementing regulations may provide that certain successfully passed semester branches may not be repeated.¹¹

⁴ In case of absence justified as under Art. 10, EPFL reviews whether it is reasonable to require the student to complete the Foundation Year at the regular session of the following year or whether the student must be considered as having failed.

Chapter 3 Bachelor and Master programme examinations

Art. 24 Credits

The credits for a branch are awarded when a mark of 4.00 or above is obtained or when the average mark obtained for the block of branches to which it belongs is 4.00 or above.

⁹ RS 414.132.3

¹⁰ Introduced by Ch. 1 of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 20th August 2019, in force since 1st June 2019 (RO **2019** 2641).

¹¹ Amended in accordance with Ch. 1 of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 20th August 2019, in force since 15th September 2019 (RO **2019** 2641).

Art. 25 Prerequisites

The implementing regulations or course description define those branches for which students must acquire credits in order to be admitted to study other branches.

Art. 26 Pass requirements

¹ The credits required for the Bachelor and Master programmes must be acquired in accordance with this Ordinance, with the Ordinance on studies at EPFL of 14th June 2004 (*Ordonnance sur la formation à l'EPFL*)¹² and with the implementing regulations.

² In the Bachelor programme, at least 60 credits must be acquired during each two-year period.

Art. 27 Second attempt

¹ If, in any block or group, the required number of credits is not acquired, those branches for which the mark is lower than 4.00 may be repeated once, imperatively at the regular session of the following academic year.

² Students who fail an optional branch twice may choose a new one in accordance with the study plan.

Art. 28 Final failure

Students who do not acquire the credits required under this Ordinance and the implementing regulations within the maximum durations set by the Ordinance on studies at EPFL of 14th June 2004¹³ are in a situation of final failure.

Art. 29 Conditional admission to the consecutive study programme

¹ Conditional admission to the consecutive Master programme may be granted to students who:

- a. do not lack more than 10 of the credits required by the study plan for the last year of the EPFL Bachelor programme, and
- b. are not in a situation of final failure.

² Students conditionally admitted to the consecutive Master programme are obliged to acquire the missing Bachelor credits within the year of their conditional admission, failing which they will be excluded from the study programme.

³ Conditional admission to a Master project may be granted to students who:

- a. do not lack more than 8 of the credits required for the Master programme, including for studies as set out in Art. 5, letter i;
- b. are not in a situation of final failure.

¹² RS 414.132.3

¹³ RS 414.132.3

Chapter 4 Master project

Art. 30 Procedure

¹ The subject of a Master project is chosen or approved by the professor or senior scientist (*maitre d'enseignement et de recherche*) who supervises it.

² On request, the Section Director may assign supervision of a Master project to a professor or senior scientist attached to another section, or to or a scientist (*collaborateur scientifique*).

^{2bis} The Master project must be submitted within the deadline set by EPFL. Failure to submit the Master project by this deadline constitutes a failure.¹⁴

³ The Master project examination consists of the evaluation, by the teaching staff member who supervised the project and an examination expert appointed by the teaching staff member in agreement with the Section Director, of:

- a. the Master project, and
- b. a defence in front of the teaching staff member and the examination expert.¹⁵

^{3bis} It is the prerogative of the teaching staff member to invite other persons to attend the defence; the latter do not participate in the evaluation.¹⁶

⁴ If the editorial quality of the project is judged inadequate, the teaching staff member may require that the necessary revision be completed by the student within two weeks following the defence.¹⁷

Art. 31 Pass requirements

¹ A pass is acquired for the Master project when a mark of 4.00 or above is allocated to it.

² If the implementing regulations foresee an internship in relation to the Master project, the internship must have been successfully completed previously.

Art. 32 Second attempt

¹ In case of failure, a new Master project may be submitted within the maximum period foreseen by the Ordinance on studies at EPFL of 14th June 2004¹⁸.

² A second failure amounts to final failure.

¹⁴ Introduced by Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO **2023** 447).

¹⁵ Amended in accordance with Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO **2023** 447).

¹⁶ Introduced by Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO **2023** 447).

¹⁷ Amended in accordance with Ch. I of the *Ordonnance de la Direction de l'EPFL* of 27 July 2023, in force since 1st September 2023 (RO **2023** 447).

¹⁸ RS **414.132.3**

Chapter 5 Final provisions

Art. 33 Abrogation

The Ordinance on study evaluation at EPFL of 14th June 2004¹⁹ is hereby repealed.

Art. 34 Transitional provision

Chapter 2 of the Ordinance on study evaluation at EPFL of 14th June 2004²⁰ remains applicable until 31st August 2017 to students repeating the Foundation Year during the 2016-2017 academic year.

Art. 35 Entry into force

This Ordinance comes into force on 1st September 2016.

¹⁹ [RO 2004 4323, 2006 4125, 2008 3721]

²⁰ RO 2004 4323, 2006 4125, 2008 3721