

# Internal directive concerning examinations at EPFL

LEX 2.6.1

1<sup>st</sup> June 2008, status as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025

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*The Direction of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne,*  
based on Article 3, para. 1, letter a, of the *Ordonnance sur l'EPFL et l'EPFZ* of 13<sup>th</sup> November 2003, (RS 414.110.37),  
*hereby adopts the following:*

## **Section 1    General provisions**

### **Article 1    Sphere of application and definitions**

<sup>1</sup> The present directive applies to all examinations and tests whose results contribute towards the total mark obtained for a particular subject (course, exercise, laboratory work, projects, etc.). It therefore defines the procedures applicable to the examinations and tests for the CMS, Bachelor, Master and Doctoral School.

<sup>2</sup> During “supervised” examinations students do not have access to external information. These examinations may be oral or written, and may be conducted during examination sessions or as part of continuous assessment.

<sup>3</sup> During “unsupervised” examinations, students have access to external information. Exercises done at home, coursework and semester and Master projects all fall within this category.

<sup>4</sup> The “section responsible” is the section responsible for the teaching of the Bachelor or Master programme. This section is also responsible for the course assessment.

### **Article 2    Objectives**

<sup>1</sup> The organisation of examinations must guarantee that they are conducted in a faultless manner and that any form of cheating is prevented.

<sup>2</sup> This organisation is intended to ensure correct marking for each subject. The mark awarded must correspond to the student's performance.

## **Section 2    Organisation of examinations**

### **Article 3    Preparation of examinations**

<sup>1</sup> The teacher responsible for the subject supervises the preparation of the examination personally.

<sup>2</sup> They ensure that confidentiality is maintained during all phases of the procedure.

<sup>3</sup> Access to documents used for the preparation of examinations must be duly protected.

### **Article 4    Students identity**

<sup>1</sup> The teacher is responsible for checking the identity of students, who must produce their CAMIPRO card; failing this, they must produce some other form of identification bearing a photo.

<sup>2</sup> The attendance list must be checked, and any late arrivals noted.

**Article 5      Authorised material**

Only material (documentation, forms, notes, electronic instruments, etc.) duly specified by the teacher prior to the examination is authorised.

**Article 6      Cheating**

<sup>1</sup> In the event of cheating or suspected cheating during examinations, the teacher or monitor must confiscate the compromising or probative element.

<sup>2</sup> In the case of written examinations, the teacher must not leave the room, or allow the student to leave the room with their script. In case of difficulty, they must call the section responsible or the Registrar's Office.

<sup>3</sup> The teacher writes a report concerning any cheating that occurs and sends it to the Academic Registrar together with the compromising or probative element. The mark submitted to the Registrar's Office is then a provisory "NA" (not acquired).

<sup>4</sup> Disciplinary measures are implemented in accordance with EPFL Ordinance on disciplinary measures<sup>1</sup>.

**Article 7      Report**

<sup>1</sup> For all examinations conducted during an examination session, conformity with the present directive is certified by means of a report signed by the teacher and, if applicable, the observer.

<sup>2</sup> Any incidents that may have occurred during the examination are noted in the report.

<sup>3</sup> This report is forwarded to the section responsible for the course.

**Section 3      Supervised written examinations**

Articles 8 to 10 apply to both written examinations conducted during examination sessions and written tests conducted during the semester. Art. 11 is specific to examinations conducted during examination sessions.

**Article 8      Preparation and supervision of written examinations**

<sup>1</sup> New questions must be used for each examination.

<sup>2</sup> Whenever possible, questions requiring detailed answers are preferred in order to make cheating difficult or easily detectable.

<sup>3</sup> For multiple-choice tests, several versions of the test are prepared, where the sequence of the questions varies.

<sup>4</sup> The teacher organises the supervision of their examination, instructing all monitors regarding their duties and behaviour, especially concerning their replies to asked questions. When a student assistant participates in the monitoring of examinations, they are supervised by a member of teaching staff or intermediary staff who is present in the room during the examination.

<sup>5</sup> If a student asks to leave the room before the end of an examination period, they must first hand in their script, which will not be returned to them. However, leaving the room to go to the toilet is authorised by the person in charge of the examination, who shall ensure that appropriate supervision is provided.

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<sup>1</sup> [EPFL Ordinance on disciplinary measures](#)

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**Article 9 Examination room**

<sup>1</sup> A place is pre-allocated to each candidate in order to avoid communication between the persons being examined.

<sup>2</sup> The teacher has checked beforehand to ensure that the rooms used provide sufficient space.

<sup>3</sup> Students place their CAMIPRO card on their table where it remains throughout the examination.

**Article 10 Examination scripts**

<sup>1</sup> At the end of the examination, before the students leave the room, the teacher makes a list of returned scripts. They also check that each script handed in is complete.

<sup>2</sup> The scripts remain confidential and are kept in a safe place. They are kept for six months after the end of the corresponding study programme<sup>2</sup>. In case of appeal, this time limit is extended until the procedure is completed. The appeal authorities inform the teacher concerned when the appeal procedure is completed.

<sup>3</sup> If the student exercises their right to consult their script, this consultation is carried out under supervision.

**Article 11 Written examinations in examination sessions**

<sup>1</sup> For written examinations conducted during examination sessions, the teacher is present at the examination. In the event of unforeseen circumstances preventing a teacher from fulfilling their function, the Associate Vice President for Education, or respectively the Associate Vice President for Doctoral and Lifelong Education, appoints a substitute (professor, MER or lecturer) on the proposal of the teacher.

<sup>2</sup> The question paper used in the examination is forwarded to the section responsible for the course and must be kept for a period of 5 years.

**Section 4 Oral examinations****Article 12 Observer**

<sup>1</sup> All oral examinations conducted during examination sessions must take place in the presence of an observer. This presence is not necessary for oral tests conducted during the semester.

<sup>2</sup> The observer attends the oral examination, and ensures that it proceeds smoothly by playing the role of supervisor and conciliator.

<sup>3</sup> They intercede with the teacher in the event of any irregularity.

<sup>4</sup> They write a summary of the oral examination. This document may be requested by the conference for the ratification of examination results and, should the occasion arise, by the appeal authorities.

<sup>5</sup> They keep the notes taken during the oral examinations for six months after the end of the corresponding study programme<sup>3</sup>. In case of appeal, this time limit is extended until the procedure is completed. The appeal authorities inform the observer when the appeal procedure is completed.

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<sup>2</sup> Time period kept:

- First-year preparatory programme: 6 months after the end of the corresponding first-year preparatory programme
- Bachelor programme: 4 years + 6 months
- Master programme: 3 years + 6 months
- Master project: 6 months

<sup>3</sup> Time period kept:

- First-year preparatory programme: 6 months after the end of the corresponding first-year preparatory programme
- Bachelor programme: 4 years + 6 months
- Master programme: 3 years + 6 months
- Master project: 6 months

**Article 13 Appointment of observer**

<sup>1</sup> An experienced EPFL staff member, proposed by the teacher, is approved as observer by the head of the section responsible. The latter informs the observer and informs the Registrar's Office of the observer's appointment, which then invites them to attend the examination.

<sup>2</sup> Colleagues of the teacher cannot perform the function of observer for the subject taught by the teacher.

<sup>3</sup> When the subject matter of the examination has been taught and is examined by more than one teacher, none of the latter may act as observer without prior authorisation being obtained from the head of the section, who ensures that no link of subordination exists.

<sup>4</sup> In the event of unforeseen circumstances preventing an observer from fulfilling their function, the head of the section responsible immediately appoints a substitute and informs the Registrar's Office.

**Section 5 Unsupervised examinations****Article 14 Originality of work and plagiarism**

<sup>1</sup> The teacher ensures that the work has indeed been carried out by the student examined and that it has not, even partially, been obtained by plagiarism.

<sup>2</sup> They ensure that the mark obtained for group work actually corresponds to the work contributed by each member of the group. In case of pronounced differences, the teacher must attribute individually assessed marks.

<sup>3</sup> Plagiarism is a form of cheating and must be dealt with as provided for under Art. 6, para. 3.

<sup>4</sup> For projects and reports, students have a moral obligation to cite sources of information<sup>4</sup>. The teaching staff sets an example in this respect during its teaching activities.

**Article 15 Coursework and semester project**

<sup>1</sup> The person who has supervised the coursework or semester project attends the defence and attests the work carried out by the student concerned.

<sup>2</sup> The teacher responsible attends the semester project defence.

**Article 16 Expert for Master project defence**

<sup>1</sup> An examination expert attends the Master project defence.

<sup>2</sup> The examination expert is chosen, in agreement with the head of the section, by the teacher responsible for the Master project from amongst experienced EPFL staff member or persons external to EPFL, and by virtue of their competence in the subject to be examined. The teacher responsible for the Master project cannot choose a staff member from their unit or a phd student.

<sup>3</sup> Before the defence, the examination expert examines the student's project work, which has been transmitted to them by the section responsible.

<sup>4</sup> The remuneration/reimbursement of experts external to EPFL is calculated according to the standard EPFL rate.

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<sup>4</sup> Code of Ethics concerning the Citing of Information Sources <http://polylex.epfl.ch/ethique>

**Article 17 Master project carried out elsewhere than EPFL**

<sup>1</sup> For a Master project carried out in another institution or in a company, the section designates an EPFL teacher (professor or MER) to be responsible for the project.

<sup>2</sup> The EPFL teacher decides on the defence procedure for the project. They can validate the defence in the host institution, require a defence via videoconference or request a defence in their presence at EPFL. In the latter case, the presence of the colleague from the host institution is not necessary, a report from the latter being considered sufficient.

<sup>3</sup> The EPFL teacher determines the mark for the project based on their colleague's report, the student's project work and, if applicable, the defence in their presence.

**Article 18 Role of expert during Master project defence**

<sup>1</sup> The role of the examination expert is the same as that of the observer for oral examinations (Art. 12).

<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, they ask the candidate questions and participates in the evaluation.

**Section 6 Final provisions****Article 19 Entry into force**

<sup>1</sup> The present directive entered into force on 1<sup>st</sup> June 2008, version 1.8, status as at 1<sup>st</sup> September 2023, version 1.9, status as at 1<sup>st</sup> January 2025, and completes the Ordinance on the Evaluation of Bachelor and Master Studies at EPFL of 30<sup>th</sup> June 2015<sup>5</sup>.

<sup>2</sup> The present directive abrogates and replaces the Recommendations regarding exams at EPFL of 12<sup>th</sup> June 2006 and the Internal directives concerning experts at EPFL examinations of 1<sup>st</sup> June 2006.

<sup>3</sup> Administrative recommendations are annexed to the present directive.

On behalf of the EPFL Direction:

President:  
Anna Fontcuberta i Morral

Director of Legal Affairs:  
Françoise Chardonnens

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<sup>5</sup> [Ordinance on Bachelor and Master Studies at EPFL](#)

## **Annex: Administrative recommendations for examinations**

The following recommendations are intended to help teachers to meet the requirements of the Internal directives concerning examinations at EPFL.

### **Content of examination**

- Students should be examined on the subject matter used during the current academic year.
- Students should be examined on a pro rata basis on the subject matter taught if you are sharing an examination with other teachers.

### **Examinations**

- The dates of examinations, their number, nature and weighting for the final mark must be announced a reasonable time in advance and are binding for teachers and students.
- The teacher themselves resolve, before the examination, any problems arising with regard to written examinations, checks their level of difficulty and verifies that all the necessary information appears on the question papers.
- Avoid introducing additional or rectifying material related to question papers during the examination. The teacher and monitors clearly announce at the start of the examination that they will not reply to any questions.

### **Examination room**

- Students must be placed in such a way that there is sufficient distance between each person to avoid cheating. Students must occupy only every second place in the rows of seats and must not be placed in staggered rows.
- For continuous assessment during the semester, additional rooms should be reserved with the SAC in order to ensure sufficient distance between students.
- A higher student density is possible if different examinations can be conducted at the same time. For example, for 1st year SHS courses, it is possible to mix students from several courses in the same room. This avoids the possibility of copying from neighbours.

### **Informing students of marks**

- Do not inform students of the marks they have obtained for an examination held during an examination session; they will be visible as soon as the SAC has entered them on IS-Academia. Exception: you can tell a candidate whether or not they have succeeded in their Master project but without giving them their mark.
- Do not tell a student, or allow them to infer, afterwards, that a mark was given with a certain degree of flexibility. After verification of the marks for the section's marks conference, the results are final. In case of error, a request for reassessment may be submitted in writing to the SAC.
- At the end of an oral examination, avoid making comments to the candidate such as "Very good, you can go". These will always be misinterpreted!

### **Complement to Master project**

- Additional material may be required for a Master project. This must take no longer than two weeks and concerns the form and not the content. The mark is submitted to the SAC, indicating that the complement was required.

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**Awarding of marks**

- Check personally all work whose level has been judged inadequate (NA = not acquired, 1 to 3.75 = fail, 4 to 6 = pass).
- Never tell a student that a mark can be altered. For this, the student must submit a request for reassessment to the SAC, which will take the necessary measures.

**Conference for ratification of examination results and section's marks conference**

- Comply with the conditions stipulated in the *Ordinance on the evaluation of the Bachelor and Master Studies*. Should unforeseen circumstances prevent you from attending, leave instructions with a duly appointed person.

**Dates and deadlines**

- Read carefully the Academic Calendar drawn up by the SAC. This gives all the important dates concerning teaching and examinations.
- Adhere to the deadlines given on the mark sheets in order to avoid students' cases being discussed in the section's marks conference without all the results being known.
- Do not leave EPFL without having submitted all marks to the SAC and make sure you can be reached until the conference for the ratification of examination results.

**Replacement at an examination**

- Should you be prevented from attending for some important reason, inform the Associate Vice President for Education and the head of the section and propose a substitute (professor, MER or lecturer). The Associate Vice President for Education will approve this choice.

**Plagiarism**

- There are a number of tools that teachers can use in order to detect if work submitted by the students has similarities with pre-existing sources. The teacher can then investigate similarities detected and identify if they constitute plagiarism:  
<http://teaching.epfl.ch/teaching-proper-source-citation>