



College of Management of Technology

Expert report
2026



EPFL CDM External Evaluation 2025

Prepared for: CDM, EPFL Direction and ETH Board

Date: December 2025

Expert panel:

Leila Guerra (chair), Associate Vice President (Education), London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), UK
Prof. Marliese Uhrig-Homburg, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Germany
Prof. Stephan Meier, Columbia Business School, NY, USA
Prof. Stefan Michel, International Institute for Management Development, Switzerland
Prof. Daniel Ralph, Cambridge University, UK
Nicola Thibaudeau, Industry expert

This report is based on the panel's observations during the visit, feedback shared with us and documentation submitted by EPFL and CDM. EPFL external evaluations are formative, peer-review periodic assessments focused on performance in research, teaching, innovation and impact. The focus was CDM, but the panel has added broader considerations that might be of use to EPFL.

This report presents the findings and recommendations of the independent External Evaluation Committee following its visit to EPFL's College of Management of Technology (CDM) in November 2025. The panel was commissioned to evaluate CDM's strategic position, academic performance, and positioning within EPFL and the broader higher education market. Our assessment draws on comprehensive analysis of CDM's operations, self-assessment reports and broader documentation shared by EPFL, meetings with diverse stakeholders including students and alumni, and direct observation of the activities. Our review was guided by the Terms of Reference focusing on mission fulfilment, strategy and organization, research excellence, teaching quality, impact and outreach, resources, and development.

We considered the global market landscape, marked by STEM & business opportunities for EPFL, as seen in Universities with similar profiles. Global demand for education and research at the intersection of STEM and business has never been stronger. Digital transformation, sustainability transitions, AI-driven innovation, and technology entrepreneurship require the integration of technical and managerial expertise. As EPFL's President noted, engineers have no training in these [management and leadership] and that CDM is here to make this work better. Universities globally are strengthening their management capabilities in response to this demand. EPFL is well-positioned to capitalize on this trend, and the role of CDM is a key factor to consider.

It is important to situate the School within the distinctive Swiss higher education landscape. Switzerland's system creates a unique competitive environment. EPFL might not be able to take advantage of some opportunities (e.g. EPFL cannot differentiate fees) but, at the same time, benefits from certain funding stability (although future budgets are more uncertain), world-class infrastructure and the prestige of the ETH Domain. Furthermore, Switzerland's ecosystem includes certain specific characteristics, including language, and a strong SME structure. Responding to the current, urgent needs of Swiss companies and the workforce demand is critical to EPFL and relevant to what CDM can offer.

This context makes CDM's strategic future-facing clarity and distinctive positioning important and highlights the role it can play as part of EPFL. Its competitive advantage lies in its unique combination of research excellence, EPFL's engineering ecosystem, quantitative rigor, and entrepreneurial spirit. This advantage is currently underexploited due to a lack of identity, visibility, portfolio challenges, and strategic ambiguity.

The panel concludes that CDM is an academically strong and strategically important asset for EPFL but occupies a niche position within the University. Its quantitative, research-led approach to management, economics, and finance complements EPFL's engineering excellence and directly supports EPFL's ambitions for impact, innovation, and education. CDM has established exceptional research credentials and delivers high-quality

specialized education. The research output is exceptional, with faculty publishing in top journals, winning prestigious awards and placing doctoral graduates at Harvard Business School and Chicago Booth.

Top technical universities are leveraging the management-technology interface as a central part to educating engineers for leadership and societal impact, translating research into scalable innovation, corporate engagement and global outreach. CDM can strengthen EPFL's ability to deliver on its core missions. But as one panel member observed, one of the fundamental questions we tried to assess was how fast EPFL goes to CDM when management questions arise. The answer received from stakeholders revealed both the opportunity and constraints faced. More importantly, one panel member summarised the panel's view by making the following statement during one of the sessions: If you closed CDM today, you would likely have to reopen it tomorrow.

CDM's potential contribution to EPFL seems constrained by several factors. The most relevant include:

- **Identity ambiguity (What is CDM known for?):** The ambiguity is two-fold: CDM's role within EPFL is not clear, historically questioned. The name reflects this: Is it "Management" or "Management of Technology"? This creates confusion.
- **Limited integration:** Despite demand and interest in collaboration, including from the five EPFL Schools, structural, historical and cultural barriers prevent expansion. The current processes and boundaries complicate cross-school teaching ('academic bean counting').
- **Limited visibility and recognition:** Despite exceptional research, CDM's perception is that EPFL does not value the outputs. This is often the case in technical Universities, particularly in non-lab academic areas. Implications include faculty hiring barriers due to a lack of understanding and recognition of social science scholarship. This potential bias is also evidenced by one of the EPFL members saying: "Everybody can do Management".
- **Underdeveloped pillars and limited size:** While Finance and Operations are exceptionally strong, CDM would benefit from developing other management pillars to operate as a (Business) School.
- **Constraints on entering the undergraduate space directly,** including financial, political and cultural barriers, but also linked to the financial model of EPFL (e.g. majority taxpayer funded).

These constraints are addressable but require coordinated action. The panel recognises the financial constraints and broader challenges. Nonetheless, we believe actions can be taken to signal direction and strengthen CDM's integration and impact, while EPFL explores medium-term structural options (including the feasibility of a sixth School). The recommendations in this report suggest ways to strengthening CDM's position, clarifying its strategy, and enabling greater value to EPFL and the broader academic and business communities.

Terms of reference

a. Goal of the Evaluation

The evaluation of EPFL's individual Schools and Colleges forms part of a cycle of peer reviews concerning the six institutions in the ETH domain, the missions of which are defined in Art. 2 al. 1 of the Federal Law on Swiss Federal Institutes of Technology (1991):

Art. 2 Purposes

- ¹ *The two federal institutes of technology and the four research institutes within the ETH Domain shall:*
 - a. *educate students and specialists in scientific and technical fields and ensure continuing education and training;*
 - b. *expand scientific knowledge through research;*
 - c. *support junior scientific staff;*
 - d. *provide scientific and technical services;*
 - e. *ensure a dialogue with the public;*
 - f. *exploit their research findings.*
- ² *They shall take account of Switzerland's needs.*
- ³ *They shall discharge their remit at an internationally recognised level and encourage international cooperation.*
- ⁴ *The guiding principles for teaching and research are respect for human dignity, responsibility in the use of natural resources and the environment together with an evaluation of the consequences of technological applications.*

The first aim of the evaluation of the College of Management of Technology (CDM) is accountability namely, to provide evidence to the ETH Board and, further, to Switzerland's Federal Council that EPFL's performance mandate is being fulfilled.

The second aim is prospective namely, to provide guidance to the College Director, to its faculty and to EPFL Senior Management by responding to specific questions that they have formulated to the External Review Committee. Another important outcome of the evaluation could be the identification by the External Review Committee, as the review unfolds, of other issues that the College should address in the future.

b. Questions for the External Review Committee

As members of the External Review Committee, you are asked to address, and – as far as possible – to comment on the list of issues presented below. You may, of course, want to focus on additional aspects that you consider to be important, both positive and negative.

SWOT Analysis

1. Please assess the CDM overall strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

Mission

2. Does the CDM fulfil its mission to the ETH Board as stated above in "Art.2 Purposes"?

Follow up of the 2017 evaluation

3. Please comment on the measures taken to implement the key recommendations of the 2017 evaluation and assess their effectiveness.

Organization and Strategy

4. Does the CDM present a sound vision and well-founded strategic aims in the international context?
5. Are the present and future activities aligned with the EPFL framework and vision and broader strategic aims?
6. How can CDM become more instrumental (at all levels of education) in an engineering School like EPFL?
7. Are the CDM structure, organization, and embedding in the EPFL School system suitable for an optimal impact?
8. Please comment on the strategy of the CDM to benefit from collaborations in education and research within EPFL and with other academic institutions at local (in particular with the University of Lausanne, HEC and IMD), national (e.g., with institutions, being part of the Swiss Finance Institute network) and international level.

Research

9. Are the CDM research areas consistent with its mission and are they of adequate scientific value?

10. Is research collaboration with other entities inside and outside the institution (other universities, industry, public institutions and agencies etc.) adequate?
11. Do CDM professors close to neighbouring fields (e.g., Operations Research, Business Analytics, or Mathematical Finance) conduct interdisciplinary research? Is interdisciplinary research, where appropriate, adequately facilitated and/or encouraged?
12. How do the research activities and the research output of CDM professors and scientific staff compare at an international level?

Teaching

13. Do the MTE, MEF, SMT programmes guarantee a solid specialist education and accommodate future fields? Do the qualification profiles focus on the relevant competences?
14. Is student diversity addressed by the CDM?
15. Does an appropriate range of performance assessments test the target competences effectively?
16. Do curricula focus on what is significant, and do they offer the right number of choices?
17. Are degree programmes quality ensured (e.g. through consideration of teaching evaluation data, teaching commissions, and outside certification)?
18. Do faculty have access to programmes, courses and support options for development of their teaching?
19. How do doctoral programmes compare to those of other top international universities?
20. Is there an overall concept for continuing education programmes, short courses and distance education? What is provided for the lifelong learning of alumni?

Impact and Outreach

21. Assess how the CDM disseminates its impact across the EPFL campus and on society in general. Do you have suggestions on how they could improve the impact, if any?

Resources

22. Are the available resources (staff, faculty, operating budgets, equipment, infrastructure, other) adequate qualitatively and quantitatively to meet the CDM obligations in teaching and research and to promote the goals of the CDM?
23. Please comment on the performance of CDM in raising third-party funding.

Human Resources: Development and Diversity

24. Assess the CDM career development schemes for young and senior scientists.
25. Assess the tenure process and the appointment of Assistant Professors.
26. Assess the CDM measures to foster gender balance and diversity at all levels.

Visit program

Day 0	2.11.2025		
Schedule	Agenda	Duration	Location
	Welcome in Lausanne		Starling
19:00	Business dinner	02:00	Starling
Day 1	3.11.2025		
09:00	Welcome by EPFL direction	01:30	Salle Vittoz
10:30	Break		
10:45	Meeting with the CDM Director	01:30	Salle Vittoz
12:15	Lunch and break		
13:45	Meeting with Deans of other schools	00:45	Salle Vittoz
14:45	Education at CDM	01:20	ODY VIP
16:05	Meeting with master and PhD students	00:35	ODY VIP
16:40	Executive education at CDM	00:25	ODY VIP
17:05	Return to hotel and break		
19:00	Official dinner		Débarcadère St-Sulpice
Day 2	4.11.2025		
09:00	Research at CDM	03:00	ODY VIP
12:00	Lunch and break		
13:30	Outreach& innovation at CDM	01:30	ODY VIP
15:00	Meeting with CDM alumni	00:30	ODY VIP (Zoom)
15:30	Break	00:15	ODY VIP
15:45	Meeting with CDM women faculty & staff	00:30	ODY VIP
16:15	Meeting with CDM junior faculty	00:30	ODY VIP
16:45	Meeting with Industry Stakeholders	00:15	ODY VIP (Zoom)
17:00	Work session (experts only)	01:00	ODY VIP
Day 3	5.11.2025		
09:00	Debriefing with EPFL Direction	01:30	Salle Vittoz
10:30	Debriefing with CDM	01:30	01:30
12:00	End of the meeting		



Project : EPFL CDM
August 2026

Photo cover: © Jamani Caillet, EPFL
Layout: EPFL Print Center

cdm.epfl.ch