

Publish your thesis while respecting copyright rules

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1. Prerequisites

1.1 Legal framework for theses at EPFL

The author is the **sole copyright holder** of his/her thesis and is responsible for its content (see the [ordinance on the doctorate](#) conferred by EPFL and [the web page dedicated to theses](#)). A thesis is considered as a non-commercial publication. Theses are also framed by the Directive concerning the citing and referencing sources of information in written work submitted of [LEX 1.3.3](#).

a. In terms of copyright, all authors are considered as equal

The notions of first or corresponding author do not exist. Likewise, in the context of reuse, there is no difference between an own work and a work of third parties.

b. Right holders

Rights holders designate people who have moral and / or property (exploitation) rights to a work, including the right to grant an authorization for reuse. They are not necessarily the creators of the work. In many cases, the right holder is the publisher.

1.2 Citation et reuse (see Fastguides #3, #4 et #6)

- The [right of quotation](#) is a **right for all** and concerns short extracts or a reference whose the source must always be cited.
- The [reuse](#) generally requires **formal authorizations** from the right holders.
- **Reusing** means reproducing a work (or part) already created (published or not) in another work. Important: images, figures and graphics are considered as works.
- **Reusing implies quoting**. For research ethics and intellectual honesty issues, the author's original contribution in the thesis must be clearly distinguished from other works and citations from previously published materials, by the author or third parties.

2. Reuse the content in your thesis

2.1 Types of content

a. Content already published (articles, images, graphics, etc.)

- Reuse without modifying
 - Open Access (OA) content under [Creative Commons](#), [CC0](#), or public domain
 - **The license is adapted to the needs of reuse:** no authorization is required.
 - **The license is not adapted to the needs of reuse:** request authorization from the copyright holder.
 - Other non-OA content
 - **Request authorization from rights holders** (see section 2.2 "Request reuse authorizations"), generally the publisher.

- **If no answer is obtained or if the right holder is impossible to identify:**
try to replace the content with another, ideally under a free license, using for example <https://search.creativecommons.org/>
- Modify content before reuse
 - Refer to section 2.3 "Modify, Redesign, Adapt".
- Reuse of research data
 - If published, they may be reused without permission by citing the source.
 - If they are not published, they should be published beforehand*, respecting [certain rules](#).

b. Unpublished content

- Accepted*
 - **Negotiate the publication agreement** in order to reuse the content without asking permission (see [FastGuide # 4](#)), and if possible publish in Gold OA.
 - If the negotiation fails or if the contract is already signed and does not allow reuse without requesting permission: **request authorization for reuse**.
- Submitted*
 - For the sake of transparency towards publishers, it is advisable to inform them of the use of the content of the submitted publication in a thesis. While some publishers may consider publication in a thesis as a prior publication, and therefore reject the submission, this remains a fairly rare practice.
- To be submitted or in preparation*
 - If the journal is already chosen, it is important to verify that the use of the content of the publication in a thesis does not preclude the submission.
 - Otherwise, deposit your manuscript in Infoscience or a preprint repository (e.g. arXiv, bioXriv, SSRN, etc.).
- Internal document (company)
 - Authorization required from the company.

** It is recommended to reuse/cite content that are available for readers. It is therefore preferable to deposit the content in Infoscience or an open archive (arXiv, Zenodo, etc.).*

2.2 Request reuse authorizations

2 main channels are usually used to request authorization:

- [Rights Link du Copyright Clearance Center](#) : directly accessible from the article webpage on the publisher's platform (link "rights and permissions" or "request/get permissions") by filling in a form, after creating a free account.

- In other cases, the request for permission will have to be made by email **directly to the right holder**. It is important to contextualize the reuse (thesis, non-commercial use, print and electronic distribution, etc.). Authorizations can be issued with or without fees.

2.3 Modify, Redesign, Adapt, etc.

a. Redo

Since raw data are not protected by copyright, a figure or an image can be redone without permission from the raw data used to produce the original figure or image.

b. Modify, adapt, translate, redraw, etc.

Redrawing, modifying or adapting does not imply only the reuse of the original work but also the creation of a [derivative work](#). In this case, the authorization from the right holder of the original work is required.

2.4 Thesis made of published articles

A thesis containing a compilation of articles published (or submitted for publication) in scientific journals is possible on condition that it meets certain [requirements](#) defined by the Doctoral School. Here are some examples:

https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/229865/files/EPFL_TH7740.pdf

- Articles from the author are cited in the introduction to each chapter. (p.21)

https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/203716/files/EPFL_TH6408.pdf

- The methodology and the contributions of various contents published are presented in the first chapter (p.4)

https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/257308/files/EPFL_TH8795.pdf

- The author uses footnotes (p.37)

https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/262894/files/EPFL_TH9147.pdf

- The methodology is explained in the bibliography part (p.23)

3. Publish a thesis under a Creative Commons license

3.1 What is a CC license?

[CC licenses](#) allow authors to define which uses of their works are permitted avoiding then the request for permission for each reuse. Nevertheless, the author remains the copyright owner and must always be cited.

3.2 How to choose the right license?

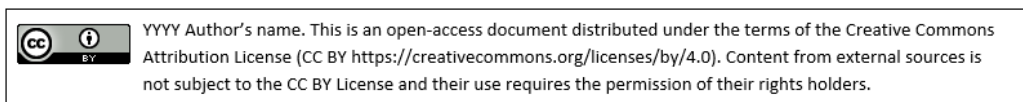
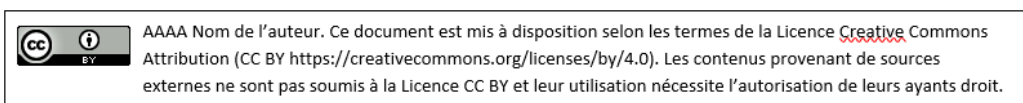
There are six different license types. The Creative Commons Foundation provides a tool to help choose the most appropriate one: <https://chooser-beta.creativecommons.org/>

3.3 How to apply a CC license to a thesis?

The reference to the license must be included in the thesis itself (for example on the title page or in the legal notice). The reference must contain at least the authors' name, the date of publication and the URL of the license; the logo of the license is optional (<https://creativecommons.org/about/downloads/>).

3.4 Is it possible to publish a thesis under CC license if copyrighted content has been used?

Yes, it is possible but the copyrighted content should be clearly excluded from the application of the license:



Here is an example of an EPFL thesis in CC-BY: <https://infoscience.epfl.ch/record/213646>.

Contact

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