

CANDIDACY EXAM – Directions for use in EDMA

*“To be formally admitted to start a doctoral thesis at the EPFL, the doctoral candidate must successfully pass the **candidacy exam at the end of the 1st year of doctoral studies**” (art. 6 and 8 al. 1 let. a of the Ordinance on the Doctorate and art. 8 al. 1 and 2 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL).*

The candidacy exam consists of a report and an oral presentation of approximately thirty minutes by the candidate about their research proposal. The oral exam is followed by questions from the jury. The candidate must demonstrate the originality of the thesis subject, the objectives and methods envisaged, state of the art of research in the area, the position of the doctoral candidate’s work within the research area and the plan for the research project.

Steps to follow:

1. Check that you have earned at least **4 credits in your portal** [IS-Academia](#)
2. **Fill in the jury proposal at the latest 3 weeks before the candidacy exam** in your portal [IS-Academia](#). There is no need to collect the signatures at this stage. The jury members are:
 - President: A member of the [EDMA committee](#)
 - Thesis director and co-director (if applicable)
 - Another EPFL collaborator authorized to fulfil the function of a thesis director at EPFL, not hierarchically dependent on the thesis director or co-director.
3. **Write a research plan:**
It should address the following points:
 1. Cover page
Fill in the abstract in your portal [IS-Academia](#) and include your abstract in your report
 2. Topic of the thesis
Explain the main questions you want to answer. Connect them with current state of research and show their importance in this context.
 3. Goals
Show what you want to achieve. Explain your foreseen contribution to the subject.
 4. Work performed
Summarize the work done since the start of the PhD. Show interim results (if any) and open questions.
 5. Research time plans
Show what work has to be done and when it will be tentatively completed (short/mid/long term goals). Give an idea of the challenges and risks in achieving each goal. Include other responsibilities or obligations.

6. Publication and conference presentations
List publications or conference presentations (if any) that resulted from the first-year work or that are foreseen in the near future.
7. Infrastructure or software
Make a list of facilities or infrastructure, including software (if any), you will need to complete your research. Explain how it is or will be made available.
8. Reference and literature
List papers and other publications relevant for your Research Plan.

The research plan has to be validated by the thesis director (and co-director if applicable) before the oral exam and should be sent to the jury members and to edma@epfl.ch a few days before the oral exam.

4. Oral exam

The doctoral candidate must demonstrate the originality of his/her thesis subject, the objectives and methods envisaged, as well as the hypothesis and related scientific arguments, including the general context of the thesis subject, state of the art of research in the area, position of the doctoral students work within the research area, plan and methodology for the research project, as well as a tentative timeframe for its completion. The jury assesses the thesis proposal, the research plan and the suitability of the doctoral candidate for completing a doctoral degree in this area.

Documents that the doctoral candidate has to take to the oral exam:

- the cover page filled with the abstract – to be signed at the candidacy exam
- the exam evaluation report received by email from EDMA administration.

5. After the exam:

- **The jury president** will return the PV (Exam Evaluation Report) filled and signed by the jury to EDMA administration
- **The doctoral candidate** will send the Research plan with the cover page signed by him/herself and the supervisor(s) to EDMA administration.

6. Possibility to retake the exam

In case of failure of the candidacy exam, the Doctoral Candidate has the possibility to retake the exam within 3 months from the first attempt. In principle, the format and the jury members of the second candidacy exam will be the same as those for the first. Second failure leads to ex-matriculation.

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