

# Regulation concerning the Doctoral Program in Biotechnology and Bioengineering (EDBB)

Please note that only the French version is legally binding.

**Dated June 20<sup>th</sup>, 2022** (*date of entry into force*)

*The EDBB Doctoral Program Committee,*

taking into account art. 3 al. 3 and 6 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate at the EPFL conferred by the EPFL of January 26, 1998<sup>1</sup> and art. 2 al. 4 ch. 3 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL of November 21, 2005,<sup>2</sup>

*decrees:*

## 1. Field of Application

The studies regulation concerning the doctoral program in Biotechnology and Bioengineering (hereinafter: "EDBB program") sets forth the rules relating to the study plan of the EDBB program as well as the candidacy exam for the formal admission to prepare for the doctoral thesis in the EDBB program of the EPFL. Furthermore, it reiterates and details the application of certain essential rules concerning the doctorate at the EPFL.

## 2. Study Plan

- 2.1 The study plan of the EDBB program requires **12 ECTS credits** (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).
- 2.2 At least **4 of these 12 ECTS credits** must be obtained during the first year of doctoral studies (art. 8 al. 1 let. c of the Ordinance on the Doctorate and art. 4 al. 3 pt. 1 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL).
- 2.3 The **required ECTS credits** may be obtained by successfully passing either EDBB doctoral courses, other doctoral courses at the EPFL, EPFL Bachelor or Master courses, or at a Swiss or foreign university, with the prior approval of the doctoral candidate's thesis Director, in accordance with the terms established by the EDBB program. Credits obtained at a Swiss or foreign university (outside EPFL) require the prior approval of the thesis Director and of the EDBB program Director, in accordance with the terms established by the EDBB program. As a general rule, a credit equivalence of up to a maximum of 4 ECTS credits is granted for doctoral courses passed at a Swiss university (including ETHZ). For doctoral courses passed at a foreign university, the credit equivalence is determined on a case-by-case basis.

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<sup>1</sup> RS 414.133.2

<sup>2</sup> EPFL LEX 2.4.1

- 2.4 Up to **4 ECTS credits** – but not those required for the first year – can be chosen by the doctoral candidate among all the EPFL doctoral course books (including the transferable skills courses) without the approval of neither the program Committee nor the thesis Director (Doctoral Commission decision, Cdoct 107, May 2015).

### **3. Candidacy Exam**

- 3.1 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 1<sup>st</sup> 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 an oral presentation of approximately thirty minutes by the candidate about his/her research proposal, followed by questions from the jury. The candidate must demonstrate the originality of the 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 candidate's work within the research area, plan and methodology for the research project, as well as the timeframe for its completion.
- 3.2 The jury of the candidacy exam is composed of the jury President, the candidate's thesis Director and thesis co-Director (when applicable), as well as two professors (one of whom may be external to the EPFL), senior research scientists (MERs) or other EPFL collaborators authorized to fulfil the function of thesis Director at the EPFL and approved by the EDBB program Director.
- 3.3 After jury deliberations, the jury President verbally informs the candidate of the result of the candidacy exam. Possible jury recommendations are communicated in writing. Thereafter, the candidate receives from the EPFL, a decision formally admitting or refusing the start of a doctoral thesis at the EPFL (art. 8 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate at the EPFL).

### **4. Annual follow-up meeting**

- 4.1 After successful passing of the candidacy exam, the doctoral candidate organizes **each year** a follow-up meeting with the thesis Director (and co-Director when applicable), and the internal expert(s) from the candidacy exam jury. When deemed necessary, also the President of the candidacy exam jury and the candidate's mentor can be asked to join. This annual meeting should occur before the submission of the annual report and take place with all parties present. With his/her signature on the annual report, the thesis Director attests that this meeting has taken place.  
In case of exceptional circumstances, separate meetings between the candidate and the thesis Director or candidacy exam jury member are possible.
- 4.2 These meetings are not an exam, but should provide additional guidance for the candidate.
- 4.3 The candidate will present a research update (10-15 minutes), share future plans, and can discuss any issues that may have come up.

### **5. Annual Report**

During the thesis work, the doctoral candidate has the obligation to submit an annual progress report each year, starting one year after the decision formally admitting the start of a doctoral thesis at the EPFL. The candidate submits a summary of the work

progress, as well as a point-by-point self-evaluation. In parallel, the thesis Director (and co-Director when applicable) complete an analogous assessment of the work progress. After a joint discussion the report is cosigned by the candidate and the thesis Director (and co-Director when applicable). The candidate then also discusses the progress and wider context with the mentor and they confirm to have met in the annual report, without reporting the content of the discussion which is confidential. Finally, the program Director will add his/her signature to the report. The candidate ensures that the above process is finalized within one month (art. 10 al. 3 and al. 4 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate at the EPFL).

## **6. Mentoring**

- 6.1 Within 3 months after enrolment, each doctoral candidate chooses a mentor. If this is not done within this period, the program assigns the candidate a mentor from its pool. The candidates may change mentor with the agreement of the program Director.
- 6.2 The mentor remains anonymous with respect to the thesis Director to ensure confidentiality (it is up to the candidate to keep this anonymity or not). The mentor offers guidance to doctoral candidates regarding academic or career choices, as well as the resolution of any difficulties met within the context of their training, in particular regarding the preparation of their thesis or cases of conflict.
- 6.3 The candidates can contact their mentor whenever they deem it necessary. The candidate and the mentor confer at least once a year as part of the annual report. Exchanges between candidates and their mentor should remain confidential unless both parties agree to disclose to the program Director.
- 6.4 It is recommended that the candidate's mentor does not participate in nor presides over the jury for either the candidacy or the oral exam.

## **7. Final Provisions**

The present regulation on studies shall take effect on June 20<sup>st</sup>, 2022 and replaces any prior EDBB doctoral program regulation.

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