

Regulation concerning the Doctoral Program in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering (EDCH)

Please note that only the French version is legally binding.

Date of entry into force: 15 April 2025

The EDCH doctoral program Committee,

taking into account art. 3 al. 3 and 6 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate conferred by EPFL of January 26, 1998¹ and 2 al. 4 ch. 3 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at EPFL of November 21, 2005²,

decrees:

1. Field of Application

The regulation concerning the doctoral program in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering (hereinafter: EDCH program) sets forth the rules relating to the study plan of the EDCH program as well as the candidacy exam for the formal admission to start the doctoral thesis in the EDCH 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 EDCH program requires **12 ECTS credits** (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).
- 2.2 At least **4 ECTS credits 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. 2 pt. 1 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL).
- 2.3 The **remaining ECTS credits** may be obtained by successfully passing other doctoral courses at EPFL, Master courses at EPFL (provided the courses were not taken during the studies), ex-cathedra courses, summer schools organized by scientific associations in Switzerland or abroad. The ECTS validation process needs approval from the EDCH program Director. A maximum number of 2 ECTS credits may be awarded by successfully passing conferences/workshops. The study plan of the EDCH program requires seminars from the program. At least 6 ECTS credits need to be Science or Engineering related.
- 2.4 For courses that focus on transversal skills, the ECTS credits can count towards the required ECTS credits for the first year of doctoral studies.
- 2.5 Up to **4 ECTS credits** can be chosen by the doctoral candidate from all EPFL doctoral course books (including transversal skills courses) without the approval of neither the program Committee nor the thesis Director(s).

¹ RS 414.133.2

² EPFL LEX 2.4.1

3. Candidacy Exam

- 3.1 To be formally admitted to starting 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 EPFL). The candidacy exam is an oral presentation of 20 minutes by the candidate about the research proposal. It is followed by questions from the jury, regulated by the jury President. 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 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 thesis Director(s), the President and one expert.
The expert must be external to the laboratory and affiliated with one of the Doctoral programs at EPFL. Exceptions can be addressed to the EDCH program and decided on a case-by-case basis; however, postdocs and external experts (from outside EPFL) will not be considered by the EDCH program.
The President must be chosen from the list of the program's possible jury President members. This list is validated every year and posted on the EDCH program website.
The jury composition is proposed by the thesis Director(s) and approved by the EDCH program Director. The role of the jury President is to ensure a fair and regular examination procedure in accordance with the regulations of EPFL and the EDCH program. A member of the EDCH Committee may join the exam as an observer if requested by the candidate or thesis Director(s). The observer cannot ask questions nor participate in the discussion and cannot participate in the final decision.
The doctoral candidate's mentor cannot be a jury member.
- 3.3 The jury proposal should be filled a minimum 2 weeks prior to the exam date. The research plan (recommended limitation of 20 pages - pdf), including the signed cover page (by the thesis Director(s) and the doctoral candidate), should be sent to the EDCH program administration at least 7 days ahead of the exam date, before noon. Failure to meet this deadline could result in cancelling of the exam.
- 3.4 Instructions for the exam: The presentation has a firm limit of 20 minutes followed by questions and discussion session. The candidate steps out and the deliberation is taking place.
- 3.5 After jury deliberations, the thesis Director(s) verbally informs the candidate of the result of the candidacy exam. Possible jury recommendations are communicated in writing thereafter. The candidate then receives from EPFL, a decision to formally admit or refuse the start of a doctoral thesis at the EPFL (art. 8 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate).

4. Annual Report

- 4.1 Six months since enrolment into the EDCH program, the so-called 6 months report is required. This report serves to inform the doctoral candidate of the progress and identify any areas needing improvement or advice. It involves a discussion and a self-assessment meeting between the candidate and the thesis Director(s), between the candidate and the mentor to preserve the anonymity of the mentor with respect to the thesis Director(s), according to the candidate's wishes.
- 4.2 During the thesis work, the doctoral candidate has the obligation to submit an annual progress report each year, starting one year after the candidacy exam. The candidate submits a summary of the work progress, as well as a point-by-point self-evaluation. In parallel, the thesis Director(s) completes an analogous assessment of the work progress. After a joint discussion, the report is co-signed by the candidate and the thesis Director(s). The candidate then also discusses the progress and wider context with the mentor, and they confirm to have met in the annual report. Finally, the program Director approves. The candidate ensures that the above process is finalized within one month.

5. Mentoring

- 5.1 Within 3 months after enrolment, each doctoral candidate chooses a mentor. If not, the program assigns a mentor from its pool. The candidates may change mentor with the agreement of the program Director.
- 5.2 The mentor remains anonymous with respect to the thesis Director(s) to ensure confidentiality (it is up to the candidate to keep this anonymity or not). The mentor offers guidance to 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.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 It is recommended that the candidate's mentor does not participate in nor presides over the jury for the oral exam.

6. Extension

EPFL has a four years doctoral program. If a thesis takes much longer than expected the EDCH Committee has decided to structure this process:

- If the doctoral candidate and thesis Director(s) ask for an extension of up to 6 months, the program Director will give positive notice to the AVP-DLE if in the request it is confirmed that the oral exam will take place within the 6 months and the necessary funding is available.
- If an extension is needed that is longer than 6 months, the request needs to include detailed planning of the completion of the thesis. An ad-hoc committee of two EDCH Committee members will discuss this planning, talk with both the thesis Director(s) and the candidate. If the committee concludes that the planning will realistically lead to the completion of the thesis, positive advice will be given to the EDCH program Director. The committee then holds bi-monthly meetings with the candidate and thesis Director(s) to monitor the progress. In case of negative advice, the EDCH program Director will join the ad-hoc committee, and together with the thesis Director(s) a decision on how to proceed will be made.

The above procedure does not apply for those doctoral candidates for which the clock has stopped because of medical reasons, maternity leave, etc.

7. Final Provisions

The present regulation of the EDCH program takes effect on April 15, 2025 and replaces any prior study regulation for the program.

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