

# Regulation concerning the Doctoral Program in Computer and Communication Sciences (EDIC)

Please note that only the French version is legally binding.

September 1<sup>st</sup> 2025 (date of entry into force)

*The EDIC Doctoral Program Committee,*

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

*decrees:*

## 1. Field of application

The regulation concerning the doctoral program in Computer and Communication Sciences (hereafter: EDIC program) sets forth the rules relating to the study plan of the EDIC program as well as the candidacy exam for the formal admission to start the doctoral thesis in the EDIC program of the EPFL. Furthermore, it reiterates and details the application of certain essential rules concerning the doctorate at the EPFL.

## 2. Organization

- 2.1 EDIC is the doctoral program in Computer and Communication Sciences at EPFL; its research domains are aligned with those of the School of Computer and Communication Sciences (hereafter IC). All regular IC faculty and all faculty with a courtesy appointment from IC are automatically members of EDIC. The EDIC program director sits as an ex officio member on the Dean's management committee of IC. The EDIC program director is appointed by the AVP-DLE following an election by EDIC faculty members.
- 2.2 Admissions committee: EDIC program director appoints annually a distinct committee which includes faculty representatives of the different research domains, with a chair or co-chairs. The admission committee makes preliminary recommendations to the program director regarding (1) selection of EDIC Fellows (2) identification of admissible candidates without an EDIC fellowship, and (3) rejection of the other applicants.
- 2.3 EDIC Fellowships are the preferred mechanism for admission into EDIC and represent the majority of admissions into the program. EDIC Fellowships are funded directly by IC School. EDIC affiliated members hosting a fellow for the semester project are asked to refund the candidate salary to IC. During their fellowship year, the fellows perform one or several projects

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<sup>1</sup> RS 414.133.2

<sup>2</sup> EPFL LEX 2.4.1

in laboratories before transitioning into the laboratory of their final thesis director. The final thesis director must be a regular member of the IC faculty or an EDIC affiliate.

### 3. Study plan

- 3.1 The study plan of the EDIC program requires **30 ECTS credits** (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System). 12 of these ECTS credits come from projects (one project of 6 ECTS credits per semester during the first year).
- 3.2 Prior to their candidacy exam, EDIC doctoral candidates must demonstrate advanced proficiency in at least one core area of computer or communication sciences ("depth area") as defined by one of the listed depth courses of the program (or equivalent) and worth at least 4 ECTS credits. The list of depth courses is periodically reviewed by the EDIC program committee and is available on the EDIC website.
- 3.3 The remainder of the credits is taken in accordance with the following rules:
- Each course in the EDIC course book belongs to one area at least; the list of areas and courses is periodically reviewed by the EDIC program committee and is available on the EDIC website.
  - To obtain the doctorate, the EDIC candidate must have taken 2 breadth courses of at least 4 ECTS credits each, respectively in an area other than the depth course validated in the first year, for a total of 3 distinct areas.
  - The remainder of the credits have to be taken from the EDIC course book. Among the remaining credits, a maximum of 4 ECTS credits can be chosen by the doctoral candidate among all the EPFL Master- and doctoral program's course books, including the transferable skills course book, without the approval of neither the program committee nor the thesis director.
- In order for the corresponding credits to count, courses taken outside of EPFL have to be at the doctoral level and to include a progress monitoring procedure (exam or equivalent). They must be approved in advance by the thesis director and the EDIC program director.

### 4. Candidacy exam

- 4.1 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 purpose of the candidacy exam is to evaluate the candidate's aptitude to complete a thesis. The exam consists of a written report and an oral presentation of approximately thirty minutes, followed by questions from the jury and discussion. In accordance with the thesis director, the candidate must select at least three articles that will be cited in the written report and communicate them to the jury ahead of the exam.
- The candidate must be prepared to discuss the originality of the thesis subject, the objectives and methods envisaged, as well as the hypothesis and related scientific arguments. This includes a thorough understanding and critical evaluation of the existing research, exemplified by the three selected papers, as well as their plan and approach for the project and the timeframe for its completion.
- 4.2 To attend the candidacy exam, the candidate must have found a thesis director and submitted a thesis plan. The jury of the candidacy exam is composed of the candidate's thesis director, a second examiner and an examination president. All must be professors or senior scientists (MER) at EPFL. The exam is not public.
- 4.3 After jury deliberations, the thesis director verbally informs the candidate of the result of the candidacy exam. Possible jury recommendations are communicated in writing thereafter. The candidate then receives from the 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).

## 5. Annual report

- 5.1 Doctoral candidates having completed their 3<sup>rd</sup> semester have the obligation to submit an annual progress report each year (art. 10 al. 3 and al. 4 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate 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) completes 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. The doctoral candidate submits his report according to a deadline fixed by the EDIC program director.
- 5.2 Approximately one year before the expected end of the dissertation, the thesis director may organize an optional “thesis proposal” at which they will provide robust feedback on the thesis plan. The high-level feedback on this proposal must be discussed in the following annual evaluation.

## 6. Teaching requirements

- 6.1 In accordance with the job description of the work contract (based on LEX 4.4.1, Directive on terms of employment of EPFL assistants), the doctoral candidate participates in the teaching activities of IC, including as teaching assistants (TAs).
- 6.2 EDIC doctoral candidates who are not employed by EPFL are still required to TA.
- 6.3 Doctoral candidates are assigned to courses each semester according to the agreement between EDIC program director and the IC Sections director (art. 11 al. 2 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL – LEX 2.4.1). The agreement is available on the EDIC website.
- 6.4 TA should not exceed the equivalent of 20% of the 100% working hours.

## 7. Mentoring

- 7.1 Within 3 months after enrolment, each doctoral candidate is invited to indicate their preferences from the EDIC mentor pool, and EDIC will take them into account when assigning the mentor. For candidates that do not indicate any preference, EDIC assigns them one mentor out of the pool. The doctoral candidates may change mentor with the agreement of the program director.
- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 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.
- 7.4 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.

## 8. Final provisions

The present regulation shall take effect on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2025, and replaces any prior EDIC doctoral program regulation. The previous regulation of September 1<sup>st</sup> 2014 remains in force for all EDIC candidates enrolled before September 1<sup>st</sup> 2022 regarding point 2, Study Plan.

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