

Regulation concerning the Joint Doctoral Program in the Learning Sciences (JDPLS)

Dated June 20, 2022 (*date of entry into force*)

In this document, the terms ‘directeur de thèse’ and ‘Leiter/in der Doktorarbeit’ are translated as ‘thesis director’ or ‘thesis supervisor’ (they should be interpreted as the same)’.

The Joint Doctoral Program in the Learning Sciences is a joint program managed by two doctoral program directors (one from ETH Zurich, one from EPFL) and a joint doctoral program committee.

The Joint Doctoral Program in the Learning Sciences (JDPLS) Committee,

taking into account the general agreement for an ETH Zurich and EPFL joint Doctorate,

decrees:

1. Field of Application

- 1.1 The regulation concerning the joint doctoral program in the Learning Sciences (hereinafter: “JDPLS program”) sets forth the rules relating to the study plan of JDPLS as well as the candidacy exam (EPFL) and the aptitude colloquium (ETH Zurich) for the definitive admission to prepare for the doctoral thesis in the JDPLS joint ETH Zurich-EPFL program.
- 1.2 These regulations are subject to change as and when there are changes in the doctoral ordinance of the two institutions or their relevant departments/schools.

2. Program committee

The joint program committee is composed of three thesis directors from each institution as well as two doctoral student representatives (one from each institution) elected for a period of two years by the set of all students enrolled in the program.

3. Admissions

The applications will be first declared admissible by the JDPLS admission committee and then can be selected by the thesis directors.

The students will matriculate at the institution of the (main) thesis director, hereafter called ‘home institution’.

4. Study Plan

- 4.1. The study plan of the JDPLS program requires **12 ECTS credits** (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).
- 4.2. **8 of these credits** are compulsory courses in the learning sciences, the remaining 4 credits must be taken in either institution in accordance with the doctoral rules of the home institution.
- 4.3. Some constraints apply to these credits:
 - If EPFL is the home institution, 4 of these 8 compulsory ECTS credits must be obtained during the first year of doctoral studies by passing JDPLS doctoral courses.
 - If ETH Zurich is the home institution, every doctoral student must obtain ECTS credits within each of the three target focus areas defined in Art. 32 of the Doctoral Ordinance, some of which are compulsory according to the Rector's Implementation Provisions.

5. Mentoring

- 5.1. 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. The candidate can contact his/her mentor whenever he/she deems it necessary.
- 5.2. The selection of the mentor is made in accordance to the rules of the home institution:
 - If EPFL is the home institution, within 3 months after enrolment, the doctoral program assigns a mentor from its pool to each doctoral candidate. Doctoral candidates may change mentor with the agreement of the program director. The mentor remains anonymous with respect to the thesis directors to ensure confidentiality (it is up to the doctoral candidate to keep this anonymity or not).

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.

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.
 - If ETH Zurich is the home institution, on request of the doctoral candidate, the thesis supervisor shall appoint a person with proven expertise to act as a "**Zusätzliche Betreuungsperson**" according to Art. 26 of the the Ordinance on Doctoral Studies and provide the doctoral candidate with additional specialist guidance, mentoring and support.

6. Candidacy Exam / Aptitude colloquium

To be formally admitted to start a joint doctoral thesis in the JDPLS program, doctoral candidates must succeed either in their candidacy exam or in their aptitude colloquium at the end of their 1st year of doctoral studies, according to the Ordinance on Doctoral Studies of the doctoral candidate's home institution.

- If EPFL is the home institution, the candidate should send a written research plan discussing his/her research proposal to the jury one week before the candidacy exam. The examination 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 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, a literature review of the research area, position of the candidate's work within the research area, plan and methodology for the research project, and the timeframe for its completion. The progress achieved during the first year must be included in the research plan as well.

The jury includes:

- the thesis director
- the thesis co-director
- a President – a Professor or senior scientist (MER) affiliated to JDPLS, see yearly list of JDPLS EPFL jury presidents,
- an expert in the research field, not necessarily from EPFL, but holder of a PhD.

The jury President and the expert may not be a member of the same research unit (chair or laboratory) as the thesis Director. The jury composition is confirmed by the program director.

The jury deliberations process takes place without the candidate. After jury deliberations, the jury President verbally informs the candidate of the result of the candidacy exam. Possible jury recommendations are communicated in writing to the candidate. Thereafter, the candidate receives a decision formally admitting or refusing the start of a joint doctoral thesis.

In case of failure at the first candidacy attempt, the candidate is allowed to re-take this exam once within 15 months following enrolment (according to art. 8 al. 1 and 2 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL). The jury composition of the re-take exam is the same as that of the first attempt.

- If ETH Zurich is the home institution, the candidate must submit the doctoral plan to the Doctoral Administration Office of the department of the main supervisor at least two weeks before the aptitude colloquium. If not previously registered, the second thesis supervisor must also be notified to the Doctoral Administration Office at this time at the latest.

The aptitude colloquium lasts at least 30 minutes. During the aptitude colloquium, the candidate presents his/her thesis project for at least 15 minutes and then answers questions from the aptitude committee and, if applicable, other persons present.

The aptitude committee is composed of:

- One member of the Doctoral Committee of the department of the main supervisor or a person nominated by the department's Doctoral Committee (this person must be a member of the Professors' Conference of any ETH Zurich department)
- Both thesis supervisors
- A "zusätzliche Betreuungsperson", if this person has been appointed beforehand.

The committee deliberations process takes place without the candidate. After committee deliberations, the committee President verbally informs the candidate of the result of the aptitude colloquium. Possible committee recommendations are communicated in writing to the candidate. Thereafter, the candidate receives a decision formally admitting or refusing the start of a joint doctoral thesis.

In case of failure at the first candidacy attempt, the candidate is allowed to re-take this exam once if both thesis supervisors agree on it. The jury composition of the re-take exam is the same as that of the first attempt.

7. 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 candidacy exam/aptitude colloquium.

- If EPFL is the home institution, the candidate submits a summary of the work progress, as well as a point-by-point self-evaluation. In parallel, both thesis directors complete an analogous assessment of the work progress. After a joint discussion, the report is cosigned by the candidate and both thesis directors. 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).
- If ETH Zurich is the home institution, the thesis supervisors shall conduct an annual status

conversation with his/her doctoral students based on his/her scientific progress report at least once a year. The purpose of the interview is to determine the doctoral candidate's current position, to promote him or her and to assess his or her performance. Other persons may be called in for the discussion. The result of the discussion shall be recorded in writing. The progress report and the result of the status conversation shall be sent to the second advisor for information.

8. Teaching requirements

Each student must meet the teaching requirements defined by her or his home institution.

9. Thesis Oral Exam

Doctoral candidates shall pass the joint ETH Zurich – EPFL doctoral examination when they have fulfilled the requirements stated in the Ordinance on Doctoral Studies of the doctoral candidate's home institution.

10. Final Provisions

The present regulation on studies shall take effect on June 20, 2022 and replaces any other JDPLS doctoral program regulation.

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