

DOCTORAL COMMISSION (CDOCT) DECISIONS

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Oral thesis exam extension requests – Cdoct 133 (May 2021)

Extension requests that are made 5 years after immatriculation (= already 12 months of extension have been granted before):

- Should not be of a duration longer than 6 months
- Must explain clearly the reasons for the delay (e.g., if something happened, if there was a long internship, if something went wrong in the research work or was unexpected, a long illness, data collection took longer, etc.)
- Must include several intermediary objectives and deadlines, resulting in an oral exam before the end of the extension

Reworded and validated in Cdoct 134 (Sep. 2021)

Mentoring rules - Cdoct 132 (Feb. 2021)

Based on the PhD student representatives' proposal, the following rules apply to mentoring:

- Pools of motivated mentors coordinated by the doctoral programs
- Mentors are professors (PO, PA, PT, PATT) or MERs*
- Doctoral candidates choose their mentors from those pools within the first 3 months, and if this is not done within this period, the program assigns them a mentor
- Doctoral candidates can change their mentor in consultation with the program director
- The mentor remains anonymous with respect to the thesis director to ensure confidentiality (up to the doctoral candidate to keep this anonymity or not)
- The pool of mentors meets regularly with the program director, who informs the concerned thesis director in case of a problem, as long as the doctoral candidate agrees

Reworded and validated in Cdoct 138 (May 2022)

Doctoral programs directors' mandate - Cdoct 119 (Dec. 2017)

Doctoral program Director's term can be renewed once.

Further renewals are only exceptional, and need to be motivated by the concerned doctoral program committee for evaluation and acceptance by EDOC.

Master courses for PhD students - Cdoct 115 (Feb. 2017)

Following discussion, the VPE concludes that program Directors are not in favor of allowing PhD students to take only Master courses, and that there is no wish to adopt a common rule since the situation varies

over doctoral programs.

Videoconference for candidacy examination - Cdoct 115 (Feb. 2017)

The doctoral program Director may allow videoconferencing upon request and with the explicit (i.e. in writing) agreement of the doctoral candidate for candidacy exam for one jury member.

Videoconference for oral thesis exam - Cdoct 110 (Jan. 2016)

As long as the President of the jury and the doctoral candidate agree on the chosen option, any videoconference system (Skype, Jabber guest, etc.) can be used; however, we should always try to offer the best solution we can, which remains the videoconference room.

Guidelines:

- Offer the best solution we can to the participants (responsibility of program directors). The order of preference is:
 - a) A videoconference room on both sides
 - b) An EPFL videoconference room, Cisco Jabber on the other side
 - c) Alternative systems like Skype, Bluejeans, etc.
- Jury President and doctoral candidate need to agree in writing ahead of the exam with the chosen option
- External expert needs a fast internet connection and participates at a calm location
- System should be tested at least one hour prior the exam

Thesis made of combined articles - Cdoct 109 (Nov. 2015)

The thesis must include:

- An introduction that puts the entire thesis into context and gives global objectives of the research to be presented in the thesis (a thesis must have glue - a red line - that connects the different papers/chapters together)
- Each section that was, or is to be, published as an article must comprise on its first page:
 - a complete list of authors
 - a detailed description of the doctoral candidate's contribution to the article (modified text decided in Cdoct 110)
 - a full bibliographic reference if available
- A general conclusion chapter, summarizing the main contributions of the "thesis"

- A section presenting possibilities for future development of the work presented in the thesis

It is recommended that the thesis includes a (single) review of the literature covering the entire domain of the thesis.

To the fullest extent possible, repetitions between the chapters should be eliminated.

Thesis jury requirements - Cdoct 107 (May 2015)

- A thesis jury examiner cannot be a previous or current, official or de-facto, (co-)Director of the thesis being evaluated
- Jury examiners must not have hierarchical relations to one another
- Jury examiners must not be in the same laboratory as the thesis Director or the candidate (also for external students, examiners, and thesis directors)
- Jury examiners must not have a close personal or professional relationship with the candidate or thesis Director (married, etc.)

Credits for transversal skills courses - Cdoct 107 (May 2015)

After voting, everyone (12 out of 12 members) agrees that 4 credits - but not those required for the first year - out of the total required amount ($12 \leq X \leq 30$) can be chosen by the doctoral candidate from all EPFL doctoral program's course lists without the approval of neither the program committee nor the thesis Director.

The doctoral course book will be enhanced with a set of courses for transversal skills, open to all doctoral programs, which can also be chosen as part of these 4 credits. These transversal skills courses, and the number of ECTS credits each carries, will be validated at Cdoct meetings.

PhD mandatory for members of the thesis jury - Cdoct 106 (Mar. 2015)

It was voted during Cdoct62 (2009) that jury members must hold a PhD as a minimum qualification.

However, for some theses or disciplines (notably in architecture) a desirable jury member might not hold a PhD, therefore: if a jury member does not hold a PhD, a dispensation can be requested, case-by-case, by the program Director to EDOC (gestion.edoc@epfl.ch). The request must be justified with a letter from the program Director and CV of the person in question. The person's qualifications will be evaluated based on his/her CV.

The Doctoral School will not keep track of the dispensations' requests. Therefore, even if an expert without a PhD has already served on an EPFL thesis jury, a new dispensation has to be

requested for each exam.

Procedure for voting a new program Director - Cdoct 105 (Jan. 2015)

Following the EPFL Direction decision of December 19, 2023, the nomination and re-nomination process for doctoral program Directors includes the following changes at steps 3 and 5:

Step 3. The AVP-PGE consults the relevant School Deans and College Directors regarding the candidacies received, and then gives green light for the candidates.

Step 5. Following the vote, the AVP-PGE proposes the selected candidate to the EPFL Direction for approval; the EPFL Direction appoints the program Director for 4 years.

Reference texts [here](#)

Members voted for the following procedure for voting a new program Director:

Step 1. Program Director/admin collect the candidate files (call to all labs)

Step 2. Candidate names are communicated to EDOC

Step 3. VPE/EDOC give green light for the candidates

Step 4. The program organizes a faculty meeting for discussion and vote

Step 5. The VPE approves (if opportune) and nominates for 3 years

With some precisions voted in Cdoct 106:

- At the end of the selection process, the doctoral program documents that a majority of the program faculty approves of the selected candidate (also in the situation where there is only one candidate standing). When needed a second vote (i.e. 2nd round) is organized
- A doctoral program Director can be elected by electronic vote, without physical faculty meeting

Evaluation of doctoral level courses - Cdoct 73 (Jul. 2010)

After discussion, members agreed to allow evaluations no matter how many participants, with 11 for, 3 against and no abstentions.

Credits for attending conferences / summer schools - Cdoct 63 (Apr. 2009)

Cdoct AGREED that conference attendance cannot be eligible for credits. Participation in summer schools and workshops with proper pedagogical content however are to be strongly encouraged.

ECTS Credits (European Credit Transfer System) - Cdoct 63 (Apr. 2009)

When the ECTS credits were introduced to the EPFL in 2004, the definition taken by the Doctoral School was agreed to be 14 contact hours plus 14 hours of independent work for one credit.

The actual ECTS definition is for 25 to 30 hours of work for one credit, without distinction as to the type of work carried out. The EPFL will adhere to this definition; with the semester system the BAMA credit is for 28 hours of work.

J. Giovanola asked members to adhere to this definition of one credit for 28 hours of work. While the separation of types of work should be provided, all courses' stated number of hours of work should correspond to this calculation and total 28 hours.

Some modification on the current course book will be necessary and program administrative assistants will receive further instructions in regard to procedure and the classification of type of work.

Thesis directors approaching retirement - Cdoct 59 (Oct. 2008)

J. Giovanola wants to put in place a new procedure for thesis directors approaching retirement. At the time of proposing a new thesis direction, the professor is asked:

- to nominate another colleague who will coordinate the internal administrative duties after retirement;
- to ensure that financing is guaranteed for 4 years. A written statement to that effect needs to be signed by the Dean of the faculty and the program Director;
- to commit to continuing supervision after retirement.

Decision on a minimum time limit for attainment of first year requirements - Cdoct 57 (Jul. 2008)

Cdoct agreed that the Research Plan may be submitted between 6 to 12 months after immatriculation.

Participation of doctoral candidates at Cdoct and program meetings - Cdoct 54 (Mar. 2008)

J. Giovanola proposed the participation of doctoral candidates at every meeting of Cdoct. Items of particular sensitivity or confidentiality would be on a separate agenda, and the delegation of doctoral candidates duly informed.

Cdoct agreed to this proposal, with 1 against.

In regard to doctoral candidates participation at program committee meetings, J. Giovanola proposed that the same rule be applied and that regular meetings have to take place. It is for each

program to decide how to separate the agenda, on the clear understanding that candidate dossiers and personal issues could not be included where doctoral candidates are in attendance.

Cdoct agreed to this proposal, with none against and no abstentions.

Doctoral candidates who have started a thesis in another institution - Cdoct 44 (Dec. 2006)

Admission of doctoral candidates who have started a thesis at another institution is generally not allowed. We do not want to "steal" students from other universities.

Language courses - Cdoct 43 (Oct. 2006)

Secretariats and program directions were informed by email that language courses do not in any way allow for doctoral credits, contrary to what was suggested by the information from the Language Centre.

The Language Centre grants credits for the courses it offers, but neither the Bachelor, Master nor Doctoral School allow these credits to be taken into account for graduation.

Cancellation of courses - Cdoct 43 (Oct. 2006)

The coordination of study plans is the responsibility of the program commissions. When a course is deleted, a simple message from the teacher relayed by the program secretary is not enough. In the future, it is requested to provide a copy of the minutes of the meeting during which the cancellation of the course was accepted by the program commission.

Some problems related to the organization of courses and their sometimes inadequate quality have been traced back to CEPF, which has formally instructed us to ensure the quality of our study plans.

Course knowledge check - Cdoct 36 (Feb. 2005)

The Ordinance on the Supervision of Studies applies by analogy to Doctoral School courses, while allowing some flexibility with regard to experts.

A doctoral candidate may not take an examination more than twice for a Doctoral School course. It is not mandatory for the doctoral candidate to take the course a second time before retaking the exam.

Deadline for submission of the final version of the thesis - Cdoct 35 (Nov. 2005)

New doctors frequently request a deadline for the submission of the final version of their thesis, once it has been admitted without reservation.

The Cdoct accepts that the normal one-month period should be extended by two weeks at the end of the year, when this period overlaps with the Christmas and New Year's holidays.

Composition of the application file - Cdoct 35 (Nov. 2005)

The Cdoct requests that the length of the covering letter be limited to 2 A4 pages, single-spaced (7 votes for, while 6 votes were in favour of a limitation to 1 page only).

Credits obtained for Doctoral School courses taken before registration - Cdoct 28 (Mar. 2005)

Credits obtained before the start of the thesis cannot be validated for the Doctoral School.

The only exception, voted in Cdoct 15 of 13.11.2003, point 4.2, being the following: "*Credits obtained for Doctoral School courses taken before the candidate's registration may be validated, with the agreement of the program commission, according to the following criterion ("no duplication" criterion): (i) that the credits are not used for other degrees, and (ii) that these credits are not taken into account when the candidate is admitted to the doctoral program (as they would also duplicate them)*".

Thesis juries - Cdoct 26 (Jan. 2005)

The Cdoct accepts by 11 votes that EPFL professors working externally as well as retired EPFL professors be considered as internal rapporteurs in thesis juries.

Course exemption - Cdoct 18 (Mar. 2004)

A. Mortensen frequently receives requests for course exemptions for doctoral candidates who already have "some experience". The Cdoct votes in favour of refusing such requests.