

Internal guideline on the draft master's degree in business (PDME) for the civil engineering section

From 16.09.2019

Regulatory basis

In accordance with the decision taken on 12 November 2018 by the Civil Engineering Section (hereafter "the Section") and with the Implementing Regulations for the Control of Studies of the Civil Engineering Section in force, students of the Master's degree in Civil Engineering now have the opportunity to carry out their Master's project in Enterprise (hereafter "PDME").

In this Directive, the generic masculine form used to designate persons (such as student, coordinator, manager, etc.) represents both women and men.

Art. 1 Objectives and principles

1 Main goals

The objective of PDME is to carry out an academic project outside the academic environment, within a host company.

The PDME is a 30 ECTS credit end-of-study project carried out at the end of the master cycle and over a full semester (17 weeks). The objectives of this master's project are described in [a course sheet](#) that can be consulted in public access on IS-Academia.

PDME remains first and foremost a Master's project and must contain an academic dimension defined and controlled by a professor, a MER, or exceptionally, by an internal lecturer accredited by the Section. It must meet the criteria of excellence required for our Master Projects.

In civil engineering, this Master's project is preceded by a [compulsory pre-study](#) (hereafter "Pre-study") which is thematically linked to the Master's project and is carried out at EPFL, in the semester preceding that of PDME. The Pre-study is equivalent to three ECTS credits and constitutes a preparation for the Master's project. Its objectives are described in [a course sheet](#) that can be consulted in public access on IS-Academia.

PDME is clearly distinct from "internships" in that its purpose is to assess the student's ability to individually carry out innovative engineering work and to solve a high-level scientific or technical problem on his or her own.

2 Field of work

To achieve the above objectives, the student will complete a PDME in a field of activity in which the skills of a civil engineer are enhanced: engineering office, construction company, industry active in the field of construction or public service.

3 General framework

The student's working conditions within the company must be the subject of an agreement drawn up by EPFL and signed between the parties before the start of the Pre-study. This agreement notably clarifies the conditions related to confidentiality and intellectual property.

During the PDME process, the student is integrated into the host company. His or her working conditions are as close as possible to those prevailing for regular employees. Working hours, occupational health and safety rules and other duties of the company's staff are in principle applied. Unless otherwise stated, the master's thesis is written outside working hours.

There is no obligation on the part of the company to pay the student for PDME.

Art. 2 Responsible bodies

1 Head of EPFL

- a. The EPFL Head of PDME (and Pre-study) is a professor or MER affiliated to the Civil Engineering section. Only the Director of the Section is authorised to authorise the supervision of the Master project by another collaborator of the School.
- b. The EPFL Head of Pre-Study and PDME is in charge of Pre-Study and PDME.
- c. The EPFL Head accepts the proposal for Pre-study and PDME on the basis of the description received from the company before the start of the Pre-study. In particular, he or she checks that the content of the PDME complies with EPFL requirements. He/she formally sends his/her agreement to the Section, together with a detailed description of the contents of the pre-study and PDME.
- d. In particular, he verifies that the student has the supervision, data and infrastructure necessary for his or her PDME within the host company. It ensures that the student carries out his or her own PDME.
- e. During PDME, he advises the student on the scientific aspects of the company's proposed PDME.
- f. He maintains regular contact with the company throughout the implementation of PDME. At the very least, he organizes an intermediate presentation of PDME with all the parties concerned.
- g. At the end of the PDME, it carries out its evaluation according to EPFL rules and using the examination protocol issued by the Section.

2 The Section

- a. The Section informs students of PDME topic offerings through the dedicated IS-Academia portal.

- b. If needed, the Section gives students the necessary support in their dealings with companies or any other administrative matter related to Pre-Study or PDME.

3 Company

- a. The Corporate PDME Manager (hereafter "the REE ") is responsible for the scientific supervision and conduct of PDME within the host company.
- b. He is the contact person for the Section within the company.
- c. He participates in the end-of-project evaluation of PDME.

Art. 3 Choice of the company and PDME

- a. It is the student's responsibility to find the host company for his or her PDME if it is not proposed by his or her EPFL Manager.
- b. He is assisted in this by the Section, which makes available on the IS-Academia portal a list of topics proposed by companies that could serve as PDME.
- c. The student may also solicit other PDME proposals from companies not listed in the IS-Academia portal.
- d. The student is not allowed to make a formal commitment to the company without having found a professor willing to supervise his or her PDME (see paragraph below).
- e. The EPFL Head must always give his agreement in principle to a PDME topic proposed by a company. He or she has the right to refuse to follow a PDME if the conditions discussed with the company do not suit him or her or do not respect the School's requirements in this matter.

- f. The practical organization of PDME is usually discussed directly between the company and the student.
- g. After agreement on the content, conditions and running of PDME, a tripartite agreement is signed by the student, a representative of the host company and the EPFL PDME Manager. A model agreement for PDME is provided by the Section upon request by the student. A copy of the duly completed and signed agreement is given to each party before the beginning of the Pre-study period.
- h. An additional copy of this agreement must be submitted by the student to the Section before the start of Pre-Study.

Art. 4 Procedure of PDME

1 PDME period and duration

- a. To begin PDME, the student must, among other things, have successfully completed the mandatory internship in a company as well as the pre-study period.
- b. The official registration for PDME on IS-Academia is done by the student respecting the deadlines set by the EPFL Academic Service (SAC).
- c. The duration of PDME is 17 weeks. The start and end date of the master project is set by the academic calendar. Before the start of the PDME and on a reasoned proposal from the EPFL Head, the Section may extend the duration of the PDME to 25 weeks.
- d. The student and the company may mutually agree on the student's remuneration.
- e. The student is responsible for any costs incurred by PDME if they are not explicitly covered by the company.

2 Supervision

During the course of PDME, the student works under the responsibility and control of the "REE" or another person designated by the "REE".

3 Problems and potential conflicts

- a. The student or the "REE" informs the EPFL Head as soon as possible of any problem or conflict preventing the smooth running of the master project.
- b. In the event of a problem in work relations (mobbing, harassment, activities unrelated to the objectives, inadequate attitude of the student, etc.), student performance judged unsatisfactory by the "REE" or problems related to scientific or technical aspects, the EPFL Head acts as a mediator and proposes a solution.

Art. 5 Success of PDME

1 Review of PDME by the company

- a. At least fifteen days before the PDME due date, the student must submit in writing (by e-mail) the complete manuscript of his/her master project to the company, with a copy to the EPFL Director.
- b. After the return date mentioned above, the company has fifteen days to inform the student (with a copy to the EPFL Director) of any confidential parts of the manuscript (see PDME agreement).
- c. If the company does not respond within the aforementioned fifteen-day period, no part of the master's project will be considered confidential.

2 PDME Rendering

The student submits his or her final manuscript to the secretariat of the Section according to the modalities communicated to him or her by the Section.

3 Evaluation of PDME

- a. The PDME manuscript gives rise to an oral defence of the project before a jury composed at least of the EPFL Head and an external expert.
- b. The head of EPFL constitutes this jury and chairs it.
- c. The "REE" can act as an external expert.

Art. 6 Case of "Mobility" students

PDME is only allowed to students doing their Master's degree at EPFL. Students on IN mobility (coming from other schools to study at EPFL) cannot therefore do PDME.

Art. 7 Credits

PDME is credited with 30 ECTS credits, i.e. one semester of full-time work.

Art. 8 Entry into force

This Directive shall enter into force on 16 September 2019.

Lausanne, 16.09 2019



For the Civil Engineering Section of EPFL

The Director, Prof. Dr L. Laloui