

INTERNAL GUIDELINE ON MASTER PROJECT IN ENTERPRISE (PDME) IN CIVIL ENGINEERING SECTION

From September, 2019

Revised version September 2026

Regulatory basis

In accordance with the decision taken on November, 12th 2018 by the Civil Engineering Section (hereafter “the Section”) and with the current Implementation Regulations for the Control of Studies of the Civil Engineering Section, students of the Master’s degree in Civil Engineering have the opportunity to carry out their Master’s project in a private company (hereafter “PDME”).

Art. 1 Objectives and principles

1 Main objectives

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

The PDME is a 30 ECTS credit final year project carried out at the end of the master’s cycle and over a full semester. The objectives of the PDME are described in the [coursebook CIVIL-599](#), publicly accessible on IS-Academia.

The PDME constitutes first and foremost a master project and must have a scientific orientation defined and controlled by a professor, a senior scientist or, exceptionally, by an internal lecturer accredited by the Section. It must meet the criteria of excellence required for our master projects.

The PDME is clearly distinct from the “internship in a company”, given that its purpose is to assess the student’s ability to individually carry out innovative engineering work and to solve high-level scientific or technical problems on his or her own.

2 Area of activity

To achieve the aforementioned objectives, the student completes the PDME in an area of activity that contributes to the enhancement of his/her skills as a civil engineer: 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 defined in the agreement drawn up by EPFL and signed by all parties, before the beginning of the PDME. This agreement mainly clarifies the conditions related to confidentiality and intellectual property.

During the PDME, the student is integrated in the host company. His/her working conditions are as close as possible to those prevailing for regular employees. Working hours, occupational health and safety rules, as well as 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 of the company to pay the student for a PDME.

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Art. 2 Responsible bodies**1** *Responsible teacher of EPFL*

- a. The EPFL responsible teacher of the PDME is a professor, senior scientist, or lecturer affiliated to the Civil Engineering Section. Only the Director of the Section is authorized to approve the supervision of a master project by any other collaborator of EPFL.
- b. The EPFL responsible teacher defines the subject of the PDME and supervises the PDME.
- c. The EPFL responsible teacher discusses the PDME with the student and the company. In particular, he/she verifies that the PDME complies with the EPFL requirements. He/she formally sends his/her agreement to the Section, together with a detailed description of the content of the PDME.
- d. In particular, he/she verifies that the student has the necessary supervision, data and infrastructure within the host company, to conduct the PDME. He/she ensures that the student carries out the PDME, on his/her own.
- e. During PDME, he/she advises the student on the scientific aspects of the PDME.
- f. He/She keeps in regular contact with the company throughout the implementation of PDME. At least, he/she organizes an intermediate presentation of the PDME with all the concerned parties.
- g. At the end of the PDME, he/she proceeds to his/her evaluation according to the EPFL rules, and using the examination protocol issued by the Section.

2 *The Section*

- a. If needed, the Section supports students in their interactions with the host company or with any other administrative questions related to the PDME.

3 *The Company*

- a. The PDME responsible in the company is in charge of the scientific supervision and conduction of the PDME within the host company.
- b. He/She is the contact person between the EPFL responsible teacher and the company.
- c. He/She participates in the final evaluation of the PDME.

Art. 3 Choice of the company and the PDME

- a. The student is responsible for finding a host company for his/her PDME, if this is not proposed by his or her EPFL responsible teacher.
- b. The student is not allowed to formally be committed to the company without having found a responsible teacher in EPFL, willing to supervise his/her PDME (see paragraph below).
- c. The EPFL responsible teacher must always give his/her agreement in principle to a PDME topic proposed by a company. He/she has the right to refuse supervising a PDME if the conditions proposed by the company do not suit him/her or do not respect EPFL's requirements.
- d. The practical organization of the PDME is usually discussed directly between the company and the student.
- e. After agreement on the content, the conditions and the organisation of the PDME, a tripartite agreement is signed by the EPFL responsible teacher of the PDME, the PDME responsible of the company and by the student. A template of the tripartite agreement is provided by the Section upon the request by the student. A copy of the duly completed and signed agreement is sent to each party and to the Section before the beginning of the PDME.

Art. 4 Organisation of the PDME**1** *PDME period and duration*

- a. To begin a PDME, the student must have successfully completed the mandatory internship (CIVIL-597) in a company and obtained the 90 ECTS required for his/her master's cycle.
- b. The official registration for the PDME on IS-Academia is to be done by the student, respecting the deadlines set by the EPFL Academic Service (SAC).
- c. The duration of the PDME is 17 weeks and it can be extended to 25 weeks, if the master internship is included (8 weeks duration of the internship). The start and end date of the master project is set by the academic calendar. The start date is always a Monday and the end date a Friday. The student must use the CIVIL-599 for registration of the PDME on IS-Academia.
- d. The student and the company may mutually agree on the student's remuneration, if any.
- e. The student is responsible for any costs incurred by the PDME if they are not covered by the company.

2 *Supervision*

During the PDME, the student works under the responsibility and control of the EPFL responsible teacher and the PDME responsible of the company.

3 *Problems and potential conflicts*

- a. The student or the PDME responsible of the company informs the EPFL responsible teacher, as soon as possible of any problem or conflict preventing the smooth progress of the master's project.
- b. Should a problem in working relationships arrive (mobbing, harassment, activities outside of the PDME objectives, inadequate attitude of the student, etc.), unsatisfactory student performance, or other problems related to scientific and technical aspects, the EPFL responsible teacher acts as a mediator and proposes solutions.

Art. 5 Success of the PDME**1** *Review of PDME by the company*

- a. At least fifteen days before the PDME due date, the student must send by e-mail the complete master project report to the company and to the EPFL responsible teacher.
- b. During this period, the PDME company responsible has fifteen days to inform the student (with a copy to the EPFL responsible teacher) of any confidential sections of the master project report (see PDME agreement).
- c. If the PDME company responsible does not manifest himself/herself within the aforementioned fifteen-day period, no section of the master project report will be considered confidential.

2 *PDME Submission*

The student submits his/her master's project report to the secretary of the Section on the due date (at noon) mentioned in IS-Academia and the conditions he/she received from the Section at the beginning of his/her PDME.

P.3**3** *Evaluation of the PDME*

- a. The framework conditions regarding the oral examination for a Master project (PDM) are defined by LEX 2.6.1 Section 5 Article 16, version January, 1st 2025.
- b. The PDME project report is followed by an oral defense of the project in front of a jury composed at least by the EPFL responsible teacher and the PDME responsible for the company. The oral defense is generally scheduled within 3 weeks after the due date of the master's project report.
- c. The EPFL teacher responsible is in charge to compose the jury and chairing it.
- d. The company's PDME supervisor cannot be appointed as an expert. Another person from the company may serve as an expert; however, if this person is unavailable on the exam date, an external expert must be nominated and approved by the EPFL teacher responsible. In no case may a person who has collaborated with or assisted the EPFL student during the master project (PDME) be appointed as an expert, except for those who are official signatories of the tripartite agreement (signed by both the company's PDME supervisor and the EPFL teacher responsible).

Art. 6 Case of "Mobility" students

The PDME is only allowed to students doing their master at EPFL. Students under "IN mobility (coming from other universities to study at EPFL) cannot carry out a PDME.

Lausanne, September 10th 2026



For the Civil Engineering Section of EPFL

The Director, Prof. Marie Violay