Regulation concerning the Doctoral Program
Civil and Environmental Engineering (EDCE)

Please note that only the French version is legally binding.

Date of entry into force September 1st 2014

The EDCE Doctoral Program Commission,

taking into account art. 3 al. 3 and 6 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate conferred by the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne of January 26, 1998\(^1\) and 2 al. 4 ch. 3 of the Directives concerning doctoral studies at the Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale de Lausanne of November 21, 2005,\(^2\) decrees:

1. **Field of application**

The regulation concerning the EDCE doctoral program (hereinafter “EDCE Program”) sets forth the rules relating to the EDCE study plan as well as the candidacy examination for the formal admission to start the doctoral thesis in the EDCE program of the EPFL. They also recall and clarify the application of some essential rules for doctoral studies at EPFL.

2. **Study Plan**

2.1 The Study Plan for the EDCE Program requires **12 ECTS credits** (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System).

2.2 At least **4 of these 12 credits** shall be obtained during the first year of doctoral studies. They shall be acquired through successful completion of a course delivered in the “Methodological Foundations” stream during the first year of doctoral studies (4 ECTS credits per course), as set out in the list of available EDCE courses.

2.3 The 8 remaining credits may be obtained through successful completion of other doctoral courses provided by EPFL or a Swiss or foreign university, as approved by the Director of the EDCE Program and the Thesis Director according to the

\(^1\) RS 414.133.2
\(^2\) EPFL LEX 2.4.1
Credit equivalence is determined on a case by case basis. Courses other than PhD (e.g. Master or summer school) shall also be approved by the Program Director.

3. Candidacy Examination

3.1 To be formally admitted to start a doctoral thesis at EPFL, applicants must in particular successfully pass the candidacy examination at the end of their 1st year of doctoral studies (art. 6 and 8 al. 1 let. a of the Ordinance on the Doctorate and art. 8 para. 1 and 2 of the Directive concerning doctoral studies at the EPFL). This examination consists of an oral presentation of approximately thirty minutes by the candidate about his/her research proposal, followed by questions from the jury. Candidates must demonstrate the originality of their thesis subject, the objectives and methods envisaged, as well as the related scientific hypotheses and arguments, including the general context of the thesis subject, state of the art of research in the area, position of the doctoral candidate’s work within the research area, plan and methodology for the research project, and the timeframe for its completion.

3.2 The research plan must clearly describe the strategy for publication and dissemination of results in leading scientific journals or at conferences. The plan shall be written in one of the official Swiss languages or in English, as agreed with the Thesis Director and members of the jury. The recommended length is twenty pages, with a maximum set at thirty pages. In exceptional cases, this limit may be exceeded, subject to approval by the President of the candidacy exam and Thesis Director. The request shall be made at least one month before the exam. Upon successful completion of the exam, the final research plan, signed by the PhD student and the Thesis Director, is submitted to the Director of the Doctoral Program.

3.3 The jury is appointed by the Thesis Director. It includes: (i) the Thesis Director (and thesis co-director where applicable), (ii) the President – a professor or senior scientist (MER) affiliated to EDCE, and (iii) an expert in the research field, not necessarily from EPFL, but holder of a PhD. The jury President may not be a member of the same research unit (chair or laboratory) as the Thesis Director. The presence of additional experts at the invitation of the Thesis Director is encouraged, in order to give advice and suggestions to the candidate. However, these experts are not part of the jury and do not participate in the decision-making process.

3.4 After the presentation, the jury deliberates in the absence of the candidate and other exam observers. After jury deliberations, the President verbally informs the candidate of the result of the candidacy exam. Possible jury recommendation are communicated in writing thereafter. The candidate subsequently receives from EPFL a decision to formally admit or refuse the start of a doctoral thesis at EPFL. (art. 8 al. 2 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate at EPFL).

3.5 Possibility of retaking the exam: The composition of the examination jury is in principle the same as for the first attempt; however, the jury President must be a member of the Program Committee. If this was not the case during the first attempt, a member of the Program Committee shall be appointed President while the former President becomes Vice President.
4. Annual Report

During their thesis work, doctoral candidates are in particular required to submit each year, starting one year after their candidacy exam, a progress report on their work to their Thesis Director, who replies with a written opinion and reports to the EDCE Program Director within one month (art. 10 al. 3 and 4 of the Ordinance on the Doctorate at EPFL).

5. Mentoring

A mentor (professor or senior scientist) shall be appointed by the Program Director for each PhD student from their enrolment date. The mentor acts as a mediator between PhD students, their Thesis Director and other members of the School or administration. PhD students shall contact their mentor as soon as the latter’s name is notified upon enrolment. PhD students may contact their mentor at any time for suggestions on how to solve any issues.


These Study Rules and Regulations for the EDCE Program enter into force on September 1st 2014 and supersede any other Study Rules and Regulations for the Program.

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