Ordinance on the doctorate conferred by the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne
(Ordinance on the doctorate at EPFL)

of 26 January 1998 (amended 1 September 2008)

The Direction of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne,
based on Art. 3, par. 1, point 6, of the ordinance of 13 November 2003 on the EPFZ and EPFL,

hereby adopts the following:

Preamble
In this document the masculine form is used to designate both male and female genders.

Section 1 General provisions

Art. 1 Sphere of application

1 The present ordinance defines the conditions, procedure and competent authorities relating to the conferring of the doctorate by the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne (EPFL).

2 The tasks of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs may be delegated to the Dean of the Doctoral School, with the exception of those tasks referred to in Art. 15, par. 4, Art. 16, par. 1, and Art. 18, par. 3.

3 The terms and conditions are laid down in the Directives issued by the EPFL Direction.

Art. 2 Doctorates

1 The EPFL confers the title of doctor (dr ès sc or PhD), attesting that its holder has submitted a personal and original piece of scientific research work and successfully completed a doctoral program, and is consequently qualified to engage in high-level scientific research work.

2 The EPFL publishes the names of those persons to whom it awards the title of doctor.

3 The doctoral titles conferred by EPFL in cases where the doctoral thesis was jointly supervised with other institutions are governed by specific agreements.

4 Honorary Doctors receive the title referred to in par. 1, followed by the words honoris causa (h.c.) (Art.23)
Art. 3 Doctoral program and doctoral study

1. The doctoral training is carried out within the framework of a doctoral program.

2. A committee is in charge of each program. It is composed of the program director, who presides, at least two other EPFL professors, and representatives of the doctoral students. Its members are appointed by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.

3. In their study rules and regulations, the program committees define study plans, which allocate ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System) credits to evaluated study results.

Section 2
Enrolment for doctoral degree and thesis preparation

Art. 4 Applicants

The following may apply for admission to doctoral study:

a. holders of a diploma or Master's degree awarded by a Swiss Ecole polytechnique fédérale;

b. holders of a completion of studies diploma in physical or natural sciences awarded by a Swiss university or equivalent institution, entitling the holder to begin a doctoral thesis in this institution without a preliminary examination;

c. holders of a university diploma considered equivalent to an EPF Master's degree;

d. holders of other university diplomas recognized by EPFL.

Art. 5 Admission to doctoral studies

1. The applicant submits a written application to the director of an EPFL doctoral program, enclosing all the additional documents required for the completion of this application.

2. The Program Director decides, based on the committee's preliminary assessment, regarding admission with or without conditions (point 5).

3. The Program Director takes into account the applicant's level of excellence, and the availability at EPFL of the supervisory and logistical resources necessary for the preparation of the thesis.

4. Any applicant who has already completed a thesis in a similar or related subject to that envisaged is not admitted as a doctoral candidate at EPFL. Any applicant who has already unsuccessfully defended, or, failed to complete a thesis in a similar or related subject to that envisaged may be only admitted as a doctoral candidate at EPFL with the special authorization of the Vice-President for Academic Affairs. Art. 17 is reserved.

5. Those applicants referred to in Art. 4, point d, must demonstrate that their knowledge corresponds to that required for an EPF Master's degree. To this end, the Program Director stipulates the individual conditions applicants must fulfill before taking the candidacy examination. Should an applicant fail to fulfill these conditions within the required time period, he is permanently excluded from the doctoral program.

6. Once the application for admission has been accepted, the applicant is authorized to enroll for the first year of doctoral study.
Art. 6 Candidacy Examination
1 All doctoral candidates must take a candidacy examination at the end of the first year of their doctoral studies.
2 The objective of this examination is to confirm the candidate’s aptitude to successfully carry out independent research work and write a doctoral thesis. The form of and procedure for this examination are defined in the doctoral program rules and regulations.
3 In case of failure, the examination may be retaken once.

Art. 7 Research Plan
1 The candidate draws up a research plan specifying the content of the thesis, the research method and the schedule of the work he proposes to undertake.
2 The candidate draws up the research plan within a period of twelve months as from his official enrolment date.
3 The candidate writes the research plan in one of the official Swiss languages or in English, in agreement with his future Thesis Director.
4 (removed)

Art. 8 Acceptance for thesis preparation
1 Candidates admitted for the preparation of a thesis will have:
   a. passed the candidacy examination;
   a(bis) obtained the agreement of a thesis director to supervise their doctorate;
   b. drawn up a research plan approved by the Thesis Director and ratified by the Program Director;
   c. obtained the credits required by the doctoral study plan for the first year of doctoral study.
2 The Vice-President for Academic Affairs decides, based on the proposal of the Program Director, whether to accept the candidate for admission to thesis preparation and notifies the candidate of his decision.

Section 3 Doctoral thesis

Art. 9 Subject of thesis
1 The subject of the thesis lies within a scientific branch forming the subject of teaching or research at EPFL.
2 It must as a rule allow the thesis to be completed within a period of four years as from the candidate's official enrolment, the minimum period required prior to the oral examination (Art. 15) being two years.

Art. 10 Supervision of thesis
1 The work is supervised and directed by a Thesis Director. The latter is, generally speaking, a professor or senior scientist (MER, maître d'enseignement et de recherche) at EPFL. The Vice-President for Academic Affairs has the authority to grant special dispensations.
The Vice-President for Academic Affairs may authorize thesis work to be supervised by two Thesis Directors. Only one of these Thesis Directors, who is based at EPFL, is answerable to the candidate and EPFL for decisions concerning the preparation of the thesis.

The candidate submits a report on the state of progress of his work to the Thesis Director each year. The latter gives the candidate his opinion in writing and submits a report to the Program Director within one month.

If the progress of the work or the candidate's knowledge is considered inadequate, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs:

- notifies the candidate of the conditions to be fulfilled and stipulates a deadline within which this must be achieved;
- excludes the candidate from doctoral studies.

The Thesis Director may require the candidate to attend certain appropriate courses.

**Art. 11 Preparation of thesis**

1. The thesis must be prepared at EPFL or in a research establishment in the EPF domain.
2. The Program Director may authorize research work to be carried out outside the EPF domain, provided that the Thesis Director agrees and that the candidate has unrestricted access to the necessary facilities.

**Art. 12 Disagreements and substitutions during thesis preparation**

1. The Program Director endeavors to eliminate any serious differences of opinion between the candidate and the Thesis Director. If no agreement can be reached, the matter is resolved by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs.
2. The Program Director ensures, to the best of his ability, that the candidate is able to continue his thesis in the event that the Thesis Director should be unable to perform his duties.

**Art. 13 Language of thesis**

1. The candidate writes his thesis in one of the official Swiss languages or in English, in agreement with the Thesis Director.
2. Upon presentation of a written request by the candidate, supported by the Thesis Director, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs may authorize the candidate to write his thesis in another language.
3. The candidate writes a summary of his thesis in one of the official Swiss languages and in English.

**Section 4 Awarding of doctorate**

**Art. 14 Thesis jury**

The jury appointed by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs comprises:

- The Program Director, or his deputy, who presides over the jury;
b. the Thesis Director;
c. one internal EPFL examiner and two external examiners; the Vice-President for Academic Affairs may grant a special dispensation if the thesis concerns more than two fields of study.

Art. 15 Thesis assessment and oral examination
1 The Thesis Director and the examiners each draw up a report in which they give their opinion on the thesis.
2 The candidate undergoes an oral examination by the jury concerning the thesis and its scientific content.
3 The doctoral thesis and the oral examination are classed as a “pass” (“without reserve”), “conditional pass” (“with reserve”), or "fail" by the jury.
4 A "conditional pass" signifies that a great deal of additional work is required regarding the form or the content of the thesis, the duration of which must not exceed six months. The Vice-President for Academic Affairs decides whether the conditions stipulated by the jury should be accepted.

Art. 16 Awarding of doctoral title
1 Based on the jury's proposal, the Vice-President for Academic Affairs decides whether or not the candidate should be awarded the doctoral degree.
2 Candidates who have passed the oral examination and whose thesis has been accepted are required to present their thesis at a public defense.
3 The public defense must take place within a period of six months following the oral examination.
4 The candidate does not obtain the doctoral title until after the decision has been made to award him the degree, he has submitted the final version of his thesis to EPFL in the required form, taking into account any proposals made by the jury, and the public defense has taken place.

Art. 17 Second attempt
In the event of failure in the oral examination, the candidate may repeat the oral examination, revise his thesis, or present a new thesis, within the period of time stipulated by the Vice-President for Academic Affairs, based on the jury's proposal.

Art. 18 Degree
1 The doctoral diploma states the name, date and place of birth of the recipient, the academic title awarded, the title of the thesis and the date of the public defense.
2 It also states the name of the successfully completed EPFL doctoral program.
3 It is issued on behalf of EPFL and bears the signatures of the President, Vice-President for Academic Affairs, and Thesis Director, and the official stamp of EPFL.

Art. 19 Publication
The thesis accepted by the jury is published in extenso. The terms and conditions applicable are specified in the Directives.
Art. 20 Enrolment fee
The doctoral candidate is required to pay the enrolment fee stipulated in the ordinance of 31 May 1995 concerning enrolment fees in the EPF domain. This amount includes the fee for admission procedures.

Section 5 Copyright and rights relating to invention

Art. 21 Copyright pertaining to thesis
1 The writer of the thesis is considered its author in the context of copyright legislation. Subject to par. 2, he owns all rights relating to copyright.
2 With the non-profit-making purpose of making known the content of the thesis, EPFL has the non-exclusive right to publish and use all or part of the thesis if it has supported the author by financing his work or placing logistic resources at his disposal.

Art. 22 Inventions
The rights relating to invention within the context of the thesis other than those referred to under Art. 21 are stipulated by the Ordinance of 24 March 2004 concerning intangible assets and participation in the EPF domain.

Section 6 Honorary doctorate

Art. 23 The title of doctor honoris causa is conferred in accordance with Art. 20 par. 2 of the law of 4th October 1991 concerning the EPFs, based on proposals made by the School Deans' Conference.

Section 7 Coming into force

Art. 24 The present ordinance comes into force on 1 February 1998.

Provisional measures ensuing from the amendment of 26 September 2005:
1 The deadlines stipulated in the previous law are applicable to candidates enrolled before 1st November 2005, insofar as they are to their advantage.
2 Art. 21, par. 2, is applicable to doctoral candidates accepted for admission as from 1 November 2005.

Provisional measures ensuing from the amendment of 2 June 2008:
Art. 6 does not apply to doctoral candidates enrolled before the amendment of 2 June 2008 came into effect.