

# Directive Concerning the Evaluation and Recognition of Teaching at EPFL

LEX 2.5.1

7 January 2004, amended on 1 September 2022

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*The Direction of the École polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne,*  
based on Art. 10a of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology<sup>1</sup> of 4 October  
([RS 414.110](#)),  
based on Art. 3 para. 1, letter b, of the *Ordonnance sur l'EPFZ et l'EPFL* of 13 November 2003  
([RS 414.110.37](#)),  
*hereby adopts the following:*

## Preamble

EPFL has a dual mission. It should, on the one hand, be an internationally acknowledged top-ranking research center and, on the other hand, an educational institution that trains top-level engineers, scientists and architects, innovators capable of assuming senior positions and responding to the new needs of society.

Teaching has always been and remains a priority of our institution. This priority applies at all levels (Special Mathematics Course, Bachelor, Master, doctoral studies, continuing education).

## Article 1 Objectives

The present directive has three main objectives:

- recognize the commitment and performance of teachers;
- offer assessment indicators for appointments, promotions and allocation of resources;
- prescribe measures allowing any problems regarding teaching quality to be detected and solutions to be found.

## Article 2 Principal measures

<sup>1</sup> The recognition of teaching performance at EPFL is based on three complementary actions:

- the clarification of responsibilities regarding teaching quality;
- the determination of teaching evaluation procedures;
- the creation of a teaching portfolio for each teacher.

<sup>2</sup> These measures recognize teaching and promote its quality. The creation of the teaching portfolio must notably allow an improvement in teaching quality thanks to the awareness of its importance and value.

## Article 3 Responsibilities

<sup>1</sup> The EPFL Direction allocates the means necessary for the development of teaching quality. It ensures that teaching quality is taken into account when important decisions are made, and particularly for appointments, promotions, evaluation of teaching staff or resource allocation.

<sup>2</sup> Each School or College distributes resources to the sections and other bodies responsible for courses in accordance with their needs. The Associate Vice Presidency for Education allocates

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<sup>1</sup> ETH Act: Art. 10b Quality assurance. The two federal institutes of technology shall review the quality of teaching, research and services at regular intervals and are responsible for sustainably maintaining and improving quality.

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resources, for a limited period (1 to 2 years), to innovation and the development of pedagogical resources.

<sup>3</sup> The Associate Vice Presidency for Education manages, together with the section directors, the entire teaching evaluation and recognition process.

<sup>4</sup> Each section director ensures that the study plan complies with educational objectives and that teaching loads are appropriately allocated. They ensure that the section's courses are of good quality. They manage teaching evaluation and follow-up with the teachers. They are assisted in these tasks by IS-Academia and the Teaching Commission.

<sup>5</sup> Each teacher is responsible for ensuring that their course is of good quality, developing their own pedagogical skills and those of their team (assistants). They develop the appropriate pedagogical supports, equipment and environment.

<sup>6</sup> The [Teaching Support Center](#) (hereinafter CAPE) offers skills and support for all measures aimed at improving teaching quality.

#### **Article 4 Teaching evaluation**

<sup>1</sup> The section director and Teaching Commission members ensure that educational objectives are clear, appropriate and in line with educational policy, and that the study plan, course content and teaching methods are well-balanced and adapted to the objectives. They rely particularly on the opinion of peers, former students and professional circles.

<sup>2</sup> Teachers are strongly encouraged to have regular discussions with their students and the class delegate in particular in order to obtain regular feedback regarding their teaching.

<sup>3</sup> Teaching evaluation is based on three complementary procedures:

- indicative feedback for all courses each semester, automatically carried out by IS-Academia, but under the responsibility of the section director;
- an in-depth evaluation, under the responsibility of the section director;
- an evaluation and follow-up service by CAPE, with customized advice, at the request of the teacher.

#### **Article 5 Indicative feedback**

<sup>1</sup> The indicative feedback is a brief, rapid, overall feedback, aimed at giving an initial indication of teaching quality as perceived by students. It focuses on the teaching and not on the teacher. A course taught by several persons therefore only gets feedback once.

<sup>2</sup> The indicative feedback is done electronically for each course each semester. All students enrolled for a course are invited to reply to a single question and are given space for any remarks they may wish to make.

<sup>3</sup> The results for a course are transmitted electronically (in the form of a histogram) to the teachers and section directors concerned. They are discussed by the section's Teaching Commission in the presence of student representatives.

<sup>4</sup> Teachers review and discuss the results of the indicative feedback with the students soon after the results are available.

<sup>5</sup> The section director informs each teacher in writing regarding the situation of their course. They commend cases of merit within the section.

#### **Article 6 In-depth evaluation**

<sup>1</sup> The section director organizes a standard in-depth evaluation for each course during the final weeks of the semester. Based on their assessment or on request from the teacher, they arrange a customized in-depth evaluation.

<sup>2</sup> The standard in-depth evaluation consists of an evaluation via a standardized questionnaire. The in-depth customized evaluation consists of an evaluation using the standardized questionnaire to which questions specific to the teacher have been added.

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<sup>3</sup> The standardized questionnaire is prepared by the section with the help of CAPE. The class delegates for the section can be consulted, for information purposes.

<sup>4</sup> If the results of the in-depth evaluation are insufficient, the section director discusses the results of the in-depth evaluation with the teacher. They try to find the origin of the issues raised and ways of addressing them. The section director may recommend that the teacher discuss the results and follow-up of the evaluation with CAPE.

<sup>5</sup> If they get the results in time, the teacher informs the students of the measures that have been taken.

<sup>6</sup> During the autumn semester, the section director sends to the associate vice president for education an annual report concerning the corrective measures proposed for the courses for which the results of the in-depth evaluation were insufficient.

<sup>7</sup> In cases where the results are repeatedly insufficient and the situation has not been resolved, the section director, after consulting, where appropriate, the directors of the sections in which the course is offered, passes the matter to the associate vice president and the school dean, who will take the appropriate measures.

## **Article 7 CAPE evaluation and follow-up service**

Any teacher may request confidential evaluation and follow-up by CAPE, regardless of the results of their indicative feedback:

- the CAPE adviser guarantees the confidentiality of the results to the teacher. The evaluations and follow-up are carried out solely for the purposes of diagnosing any issues, providing advice and seeking solutions leading to improvement;
- the evaluation is based on a questionnaire and, if desired, on direct observation of the course;
- the evaluation and follow-up service includes an analysis of the results and concrete proposals for improvement that are discussed with the teacher;
- it is up to the teacher to benefit from the evaluation and follow-up service, and use the results to their advantage as they wish.

## **Article 8 Emergency measure**

<sup>1</sup> When students make a justified request for a particular course to be improved as a matter of urgency, the class delegate passes this request on to the teacher, who may propose changes and request an evaluation and follow-up by CAPE.

<sup>2</sup> If the teacher refuses to discuss the matter, the class delegate asks the section director to resolve the problem. If the teacher refuses to collaborate, the case is passed on to the school dean and the associate vice president for education.

## **Article 9 Evaluation of examinations**

<sup>1</sup> The section director does a comparative analysis of examination marks by class, by subject and by course. In the event of significant disparities, they seek their origin and take the necessary measures to resolve them.

<sup>2</sup> Each teacher receives the necessary information to compare their marks and those that other teachers have given to the same class.

<sup>3</sup> On a more global basis, the Section Directors' Conference (CDS) analyzes the examination failure rates of the different sections each year. Cases of significant disparities are discussed and clarified. If necessary, the vice president for education takes the necessary measures.

## **Article 10 Teaching portfolio**

<sup>1</sup> For each appointment, contract renewal and promotion, the candidate must present a teaching portfolio.

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<sup>2</sup> The teaching portfolio allows each teacher to exhibit their teaching experience and pedagogic skills, describe their teaching concept and projects and state their various commitments in favor of teaching.

<sup>3</sup> The non-exhaustive list below identifies important criteria (detailed in the annex) for the assessment of the quality of teaching. The teaching portfolio should contain reference to whichever elements are most relevant to the courses taught by a teacher:

- Is there a clear focus on student learning?
- Is teaching well aligned with the overall goals of the program and with other courses in the program?
- What are the approaches used to improve the quality of teaching over time?

<sup>4</sup> The teacher's portfolio comprises in particular:

- a description of their courses and teaching contributions with the teaching objectives pursued and the underlying pedagogy. The section director signs it to confirm that they have taken note of its content;
- if so desired by the teacher, the results of in-depth evaluations for the entire period covered by the portfolio;
- other sources of information which the teacher wishes to present to support the case that they meet the evaluation criteria (see annex);
- the teacher's comments regarding the evaluations and their courses;
- a letter of reference from the section director;
- the teacher's participation in all types of pedagogic activities (commissions, seminars, research, projects, etc.).
- a letter of reference from the director of the doctoral program attesting to the candidate's contributions to doctoral education. The contribution shall be reviewed in terms of the candidate's qualities as a thesis supervisor, participation in teaching doctoral courses, commitment as a mentor, involvement as a member of the doctoral program committee, as well as participation in scientific and social activities related to doctoral training.

## **Article 11 Sphere of application**

<sup>1</sup> The evaluation measures defined in the present directive are applicable to Bachelor's and Master's courses and the Special Mathematics Course (CMS). In the latter case, the provisions concerning the section director apply by analogy to the CMS director.

<sup>2</sup> For the evaluation of doctoral school and continuing education courses, the associate vice president for postgraduate education may define different measures and procedures, providing that these have been submitted to the EPFL Direction for approval in advance.

## **Article 12 Compliance with directive**

The associate vice president for education ensures that the present directive is complied with.

**Article 13 Entry into force**

The present directive entered into force on 7 January 2004 and was amended on 1 September 2022 (version 4.0).

On behalf of the EPFL Direction:

President:  
Martin Vetterli

Director of Legal Affairs:  
Françoise Chardonnens

## **Annex**

### **1. Details of the criteria mentioned in Article 10.3 of the directive**

Is there a clear focus on student learning?

- a. Have clear student learning goals been identified?
- b. Is the content material of the course appropriately challenging?
- c. What student activities and assessments have been devised to address these learning goals?

Is the course well aligned with the overall goals of the program and with other courses in the program?

- d. Does the teacher have a significant impact within their section, within EPFL, or within the wider community?
- e. Has the teacher shown a willingness to teach foundation-level courses, if required?

What are the approaches used to improve the quality of teaching over time?

- f. What different sources of information (see section 2, below) have been used to evaluate the quality of teaching?
- g. Is the teacher exchanging with peers, potential employers or former students regarding learning outcomes?
- h. Is the teacher exchanging with peers (within the school or outside) regarding contents and teaching approaches?

### **2. Other sources of evidence that may be included in a teaching portfolio:**

- a review of the learning objectives of the course and their relationship with those of other courses and of the program as a whole
- feedback from peers on the quality of classes, exercises, examination material or on student results
- feedback from former students
- performance of recent cohorts of students in achieving the learning outcomes of the course
- course evaluations carried out by CAPE
- other documents selected by the teacher, such as a diploma for best teacher.

This list is non-exhaustive. The inclusion of such additional sources of information is at the discretion of the teacher.