

Directive concerning the evaluation and recognition of teaching at the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne

LEX 2.5.1

7th January 2004, amended 1st January 2007, status as at 13th April 2018

*The Direction of the Ecole polytechnique fédérale de Lausanne, based on Art. 10a of the Federal Act on the Federal Institutes of Technology¹ of 4th October 1991 ([RS 414.110](#)), based on Art. 3 para. 1, letter b, of the *Ordonnance sur l'EPFZ et l'EPFL* of 13th 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 centre 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:

- recognise the commitment and performance of teaching staff;
- 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 Principle measures

¹ 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 teaching staff member.

² These measures recognise 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

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

² Each School or College distributes resources to the sections and other bodies responsible for courses in accordance with their needs. The Vice-Presidency for Education allocates resources, for a limited period (1 to 2 years), to innovation and the development of pedagogical resources.

¹ FIT Act: Art. 10a Quality assurance. The FITs shall review the quality of teaching, research and services at regularly intervals in accordance with the legislation on support for universities; they are responsible for long-term quality assurance.

³ The Vice-Presidency for Education manages, together with the Section Directors, the entire teaching evaluation and recognition process.

⁴ 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 teaching staff. They are assisted in these tasks by IS-Academia and the Teaching Commission.

⁵ Each teaching staff member 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.

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

Article 4 Teaching evaluation

¹ 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.

² Teaching staff 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.

³ Teaching evaluation is based on three complementary procedures:

- an indicative evaluation of all teaching staff members 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, of all courses judged as being inadequate when the indicative evaluation was carried out;
- an evaluation and follow-up service by CAPE, with personal advice, at the request of the teaching staff member.

Article 5 Indicative evaluation

¹ The indicative evaluation is a brief, rapid, overall evaluation, 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 is therefore only evaluated once.

² The indicative evaluation is done electronically for each course during approximately the 10th week of 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.

³ The evaluation results for a course are transmitted electronically (in the form of a histogram) to the teaching staff and Section Directors concerned, the School Direction and, in accordance with a decision made by the President², to the students concerned. The results are also made available to the bodies in charge of education and academic promotion. The remarks are not communicated to the students however.

⁴ Teaching staff discuss the evaluation results with the students before the end of the semester.

⁵ The Section Director informs each teaching staff member in writing regarding the situation of their course. He commends cases of merit within the Section.

Article 6 In-depth evaluation

¹ When the score obtained for a course for the indicative evaluation is inadequate, the Section Director organises an in-depth evaluation before the end of the semester.

² Decision under the responsibility of the President of EPFL.

² The section draws up a questionnaire adapted to the course, with the help of the teaching staff member(s) concerned and, if necessary, of the Class Delegate and/or CAPE. This questionnaire is distributed to the students enrolled on the course.

³ The Section Director discusses the results of the in-depth evaluation with the teaching staff member. Together they try to find the origin of the problem and ways of resolving it. The Section Director may recommend that the teaching staff member should discuss the results and follow-up of the evaluation with CAPE.

⁴ The teaching staff member informs the students of the measures that have been taken.

⁵ Before the start of the academic year at the beginning of September, the Section Director sends to the Vice-President for Education an annual report concerning courses that have required in-depth evaluation and the corrective measures proposed.

⁶ In cases of repeated inadequacy, the Section Director passes the matter to the Vice-President for Education and the School Dean who will take the necessary measures.

Article 7 CAPE evaluation and follow-up service

Any teaching staff member may request confidential evaluation and follow-up by CAPE, regardless of the results of their indicative evaluation:

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

Article 8 Emergency measure

¹ 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 teaching staff member, who may propose changes and request an evaluation and follow-up by CAPE.

² If the teaching staff member refuses to discuss the matter, the Class Delegate asks the Section Director to resolve the problem. If the teaching staff member refuses to collaborate, the case is passed on to the Vice-President for Education.

Article 9 Evaluation of examinations

¹ The Section Director does a comparative analysis of examination marks by class, by subject and by course. In the event of significant disparities, he seeks their origin and takes the necessary measures to resolve them.

² Each teaching staff member receives the necessary information to compare their marks and those that other teaching staff members have given to the same class.

³ On a more global basis, the Section Directors' Conference (CDS) analyses 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

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

² The teaching portfolio allows each teaching staff member to exhibit their teaching experience and pedagogic skills, describe their teaching concept and projects and state their various commitments in favour of teaching.

³ The teaching staff member's portfolio comprises in particular:

- a detailed description (1-2 pages) of their courses and teaching contributions with the teaching objectives pursued and the underlying pedagogy. The Section Director signs it to confirm that he has taken note of its content;
- the results of the indicative and in-depth evaluations for the entire period covered by the portfolio;
- the teaching staff member's comments regarding the evaluations and their courses;
- a letter of reference from the Section Director;
- their participation in all types of pedagogic activities (commissions, seminars, research, projects, etc.);
- a letter of reference from the Director of the Doctoral Programme 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 programme committee, as well as participation in scientific and social activities related to doctoral training.

⁴ The teaching portfolio may also contain:

- course evaluations carried out by CAPE;
- a survey conducted among former students who have attended the course;
- other documents selected by the teaching staff member, such as diploma for best teacher.

Article 11 Sphere of application

¹ The evaluation measures defined in the present directive are applicable to Bachelor and Master courses and the Special Mathematics Course (CMS). In the latter case, the provisions concerning the Section Director apply by analogy to the CMS Director.

² For the evaluation of Doctoral School and Continuing Education courses, the respective Deans may define different measures and procedures, providing they submit them to the EPFL Direction for approval.

Article 12 Compliance with directive

The Vice-President for Education ensures that the present directive is complied with.

Article 13 Entry into force

The present directive entered into force on 7th January 2004, and was amended on 1st January 2007. Version 1.7, status as at 13th April 2018.

On behalf of the EPFL Direction:

President:
Martin Vetterli

General Counsel:
Susan Killias