



## PhD Charter of the Université de Lyon

### Preamble

The doctoral programme of the Université de Lyon is governed by the provisions of the French Ministerial Order of 25 May 2016, specifying the national framework for training programmes, as well as the conditions and procedures for awarding the French PhD degree. It also respects the recommendations and principles of the European Charter for Researchers and Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers. The degree is delivered by the Université de Lyon COMUE (community of universities and higher-education institutions). The doctoral student's administrative registration and thesis preparation are carried out at one of the Université de Lyon's "operating institutions".

The preparation of a thesis relies upon the agreement freely concluded between the PhD student and his/her thesis director. This agreement covers the chosen thesis subject and the working conditions necessary for the research to be properly pursued. Therefore, both the thesis director and the PhD student are accorded their own respective rights and obligations.<sup>1</sup>

This charter specifies these reciprocal commitments. It commits each party to respecting the applicable ethical standards and rules of conduct, according to both the regulations in effect and tried-and-tested practices, and with due regard to the diversity of disciplines, doctoral schools and institutions. Its objective is to guarantee a high level of scientific quality.

The COMUE Université de Lyon, the "operating institutions" overseeing the thesis and the doctoral school management all agree to act in such a manner as to ensure that the principles laid out by the present charter are respected during the thesis preparation. In the event of an international jointly-supervised thesis or a partnership with an organization from outside the university giving rise to an agreement, the head of the registration institution ensures that this agreement meets the principles of the present charter.

At the time of the PhD student's initial registration, the present charter must be signed by the student, the thesis director and the director of the host laboratory. This unique text applies to all PhD students registered at a Université de Lyon doctoral school and may be complemented by specific provisions laid out either in an amendment drafted by the operating institution or in the internal rules and regulations of each doctoral school.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Please note: For the purposes of this document, the term "thesis director" refers to both the director and any thesis co-director(s).*

## **1. The PhD thesis: important stage of a personalized, professional project**

A thesis must be prepared within the framework of a personalized, professional project with clearly defined goals and requirements. Clarity is necessary with regard to the objectives pursued and the means implemented for their attainment.

The PhD student's research work constitutes a veritable professional activity carried out within the framework of a recognized laboratory and a doctoral school of the Université de Lyon. The doctoral degree confirms and validates a high level of training associated with innovative research work. The PhD student is therefore considered a veritable researcher acquiring recognized professional experience.

From an administrative point of view, the PhD student retains his/her status as a student. In application of the present charter, an individual training agreement is drafted, in accordance with the Ministerial Order of 25 May 2016 specifying the agreement's contents. This agreement must be signed by both the thesis director and the PhD student no later than 6 months following the student's initial thesis registration. The agreement can be modified annually during the student's reregistration, and its implementation is guaranteed by the student's registration institution.

To correctly carry out his/her research work, the PhD student must be provided sufficient resources. A level of funding comparable to that obtained by way of a doctoral contract must be sought, and priority must be given financing in the form of employment contracts. If the PhD student's resources are provided by a professional activity not directly connected to his/her thesis (e.g., teaching), the thesis duration shall be considered part-time (at least 50% of the student's work time). The funding plan for the duration of the thesis is elaborated during the student's initial registration and included in his/her individual training agreement. Research work assigned to the student must be compatible with the proposed duration of funding.

The Université de Lyon and the doctoral schools agree to maintain a website and to provide PhD students with complete information regarding the proposed professional-integration measures and services, the career opportunities available to PhD students and the future prospects of PhD holders. This information will notably allow the PhD student to rapidly define his/her professional project, which will then be continually specified throughout the duration of the thesis, so as to enrich the student's portfolio of skills and expertise. During the pursuit of their thesis, and for their further information and training, PhD students are required to take the transversal training modules including the professional-integration modules according to the provisions laid down by their doctoral school; they must also participate in the activities and events organized by the doctoral school and the Université de Lyon at the Lyon and Saint-Étienne sites. So as to facilitate the gathering and distribution of information, all PhD holders agree to inform their respective doctoral school and the Université de Lyon of their professional future and career during a period of five years following their obtaining the doctoral degree (notably by answering the questionnaires/surveys sent to them).

## 2. Defining the subject and thesis feasibility

The thesis subject entails carrying out a personalized training project that is at once unique, innovative and educational, ideally to be completed within the three-year time limit (for full-time theses). The student's supervisors ensure that he/she demonstrates a critical spirit and acquires a certain level of autonomy during his/her research activity.

The chosen subject relies upon the agreement reached between the PhD student and his/her supervisors, duly formalized prior to the student's definitive registration.

The thesis director is a member of one of the research teams recognized following a national evaluation and attached to the doctoral school; he/she is a recognized expert within the relevant field of research, and must accompany the PhD student during a dialogue and discussion stage meant to:

- Reveal the innovative and topical nature of the proposed thesis subject within the scientific context ("state of the art" analysis).
- Inform the PhD student regarding the subject's inherent constraints and limitations.
- Present to the PhD student the research team (other PhD students, teachers, researchers and technicians, the team's programmes and sources of funding, etc.), and how the project fits into the team's field of scientific study.
- Map out the principal stages of the thesis project (scientific work and dissemination).
- Envisage possible external collaborations and the PhD student's international mobility.
- Consider with the PhD student the available means of funding (doctoral contract, CIFRE, research contract or other forms of funding or co-funding) to ensure the student's material autonomy and his/her capacity to properly pursue his/her work while preparing the thesis.
- Evaluate the possible career opportunities and professional prospects.

This dialogue stage results in the drafting of a research project elaborated by the PhD student and supervised by the thesis director. This project shall be clearly described in the individual training agreement.

The thesis director agrees to specify the means (useful information, materials and equipment) necessary for carrying out the thesis work, while ensuring the PhD student's free access to said means. To this end, the PhD student is fully integrated into his/her research unit or team. In order to successfully pursue his/her research work, the PhD student enjoys access, whenever possible, to the same facilities as tenured researchers: access to the same equipment, documentation, computers and digital resources, as well as the possibility to attend seminars and conferences and there present his/her work.

The PhD student is represented within the proceedings of his/her research unit, registration institution and the Université de Lyon, as well as in his/her doctoral school council.

The PhD student agrees to:

- Respecting the provisions established, at the time of registration, regarding the subject, duration and schedule of the thesis project.
- Regularly informing the thesis director of the progress made and any difficulties encountered, and together defining various possible orientations of the subject depending on the results obtained.
- Regularly presenting the ongoing evolution of his/her research during the thesis monitoring committee meetings, according to the provisions laid out in the internal rules and regulations of his/her doctoral school.
- Respecting the established rules of ethical conduct, notably the authenticity of his/her thesis, as well as the confidentiality of certain work, if applicable.
- Furnishing the supervisory team with his/her laboratory notebook and all data generated during his/her thesis.
- Respecting the communal rules shared by all members of the student's research unit.
- Diligently attending and participating in all training courses, activities and events for which he/she is registered.
- Participating in the life and activities of his/her doctoral school, and respecting its internal rules and regulations.

### **3. Supervision and monitoring of the thesis**

#### The thesis director's role and commitments

The thesis director must favour the student's successful integration into his/her host laboratory.

When approached by the student, the thesis director must inform the student of the number of theses he/she is currently supervising, as well as the maximum number of such supervised theses set by the doctoral school. Indeed, a thesis director can only effectively supervise and monitor the work of a limited number of PhD students.

The thesis director must provide the PhD student with personalized scientific supervision, and he/she agrees to dedicating a significant portion of his/her time to this important task. The initial thesis agreement must define the principle and periodicity of the regular meetings between the student and his/her director. However, regardless of this pre-established periodicity, the PhD student must be able to meet with his/her thesis director as often as proves necessary.

The thesis director is entirely responsible for the scientific supervision of the PhD student's thesis work, and this responsibility may not be delegated. However, this responsibility may be

shared with a co-director, or even a second co-director when the latter is a non-academic from the socio-economic world.

The thesis director agrees to regularly monitoring the student's work and progress, and considering new directions meriting exploration given the ever-evolving results. The thesis director has the obligation to inform the PhD student of any positive assessments or, conversely, objections and criticisms liable to be provoked by the student's work, notably during the thesis monitoring committee meetings and, of course, at the time of his/her thesis defence.

### The doctoral school's role and commitments

The doctoral school ensures a mission of training and monitoring its PhD students:

- It validates the research projects and any complementary activities entrusted to the PhD students.
- It upholds the policies of recruitment, supervision and monitoring of PhD students as defined in the school's internal rules and regulations; it is notably responsible for organizing the competitive recruitments via doctoral contracts.
- It organizes training courses to complement those offered by the Université de Lyon, so as to accompany and support the PhD students' research work and help them prepare for their future professional career.
- It upholds the rules governing the carrying out of the thesis, paying particular attention to the ethical aspects of the science and research pursued. These ethical considerations shall be the subject of an annual plan presented to the Research Commission of the Université de Lyon.
- It informs the PhD students of any scientific activity liable to be of interest to them.
- It defines, as part of its internal rules and regulations, the organization and setup of the thesis monitoring committee meetings (periodicity, composition, expectations and standards, etc.) and ensures the proper carrying out of its students' theses.

### Jury and thesis defence

The conditions and provisions concerning the jury composition and the thesis defence must conform to current legislation and are validated by the operating institution overseeing the thesis.

After meeting with the PhD student, the thesis director proposes to the head of the operating institution, by way of the doctoral school director, the composition of the jury and the thesis defence date, in accordance with current legislation (Ministerial Order of 25 May 2016 relative to doctoral training). The thesis paper's submission to the university library is a necessary precondition for the thesis defence. After the rapporteurs have submitted their opinion, the thesis defence must be held during the final year of the student's approved registration, at his/her registration institution (any exceptions to this rule must be pre-approved by the registration institution).

#### 4. Thesis duration

In accordance with the spirit of doctoral studies and in the PhD student's own interest, the standard thesis duration is ideally three years for a full-time PhD student or up to six years for a part-time PhD student. In this case, the individual training agreement must specify the total thesis duration, as well as those periods dedicated to the thesis preparation work.

At the end of the second year, the expected defence date must be discussed during the thesis monitoring committee meeting, based upon the progress of the research work thus far carried out.

If the remaining work cannot be completed within the standard three-year period (for a full-time thesis), an additional year may be granted by the head of the operating institution – upon reasoned request by the PhD student and his/her thesis director, approved by the doctoral school director – according to the following two exceptional provisions:

- An extension may be granted for a maternity leave, an extended illness or a work-related accident, in accordance with current legislation.
- An exemption may be granted for a specificity of the research inherent to certain fields or for the existence of certain specific risks.

This agreement does not signify the automatic extension of the PhD student's funding; however, the concerned parties must explore all possible avenues for further assistance.

To conform to the planned duration, the PhD student and his/her thesis director must respect their commitments as described in paragraphs 2 and 3 of the present charter. Repeated failures to respect these commitments shall be the subject of a joint report prepared by both parties, resulting, if need be, in a mediation procedure (see paragraph 6).

#### Year-long caesura

In accordance with the ministerial order relative to doctoral training, a year-long caesura is possible, in accordance with the conditions set by the PhD student's doctoral school. This break is subject to the previous approval of the student's registration institution and, in certain cases, the student's employer, and shall not count towards the doctoral training duration. The student must make a reasoned and well-considered proposal to benefit from such a caesura, which must not hamper the quality and recognition of his/her scientific work. It must be ensured that the student is subject to no pressure to benefit from this year-long break so as to carry out any concealed work. The student's registration institution guarantees his/her re-registration at his/her doctoral school following the caesura period.

#### Abandoning a thesis

In the event of a student abandoning his/her thesis, he/she must inform his/her supervisors, the director(s) of his/her research unit, the director(s) of his/her doctoral school and his/her operating institution. The student must also take the necessary measures to terminate, if applicable, any specific funding that he/she benefits from for his/her doctoral studies. The

PhD student may request the director of his/her research unit for a "research certificate", to be used at his/her own discretion. This certificate shall specify the nature and duration of the work carried out, as well as the context of the research.

## **5. Publication and dissemination of the thesis**

The quality and impact of a thesis can be measured by the papers at key conferences, the peer-reviewed publications and the patents derived from the PhD student's work (whether the thesis itself or articles written during or following the manuscript's preparation).

The PhD student can only publish with the prior consent of his/her thesis director; conversely, the PhD student must co-author any written publication derived from his/her work.

The various disciplines each have their own manner of measuring the quality of publications, and it is the doctoral schools' responsibility to ensure that their defended theses meet the standards expected within each separate discipline.

Prior to the thesis, the student's thesis director and his/her doctoral school must explain what is expected with regard to publications, what the scientific community (particularly the National Council of Universities - CNU) expects of a thesis in the given field, and the policy followed with regard to the signing of articles. Possible publication restrictions (financial limits, confidentiality clauses, etc.) shall also be explained to the PhD student. Intellectual property issues that are liable to concern the student's work or the laboratory's general activities shall be clearly explained to the PhD student, in accordance with the rules in effect at the student's research unit. If a particular confidentiality clause exists, it must be clearly specified in the individual training agreement.

Following the thesis defence, the PhD student agrees to provide his/her supervisors with the duly corrected manuscript (in paper and digital formats). The student must respect the current rules governing the library submission and dissemination of his/her thesis paper, within the three months following his/her thesis defence.

## **6. Mediation procedure**

In the event of any dispute concerning the carrying out of the thesis, a mediation within the PhD student's research unit shall be the first solution pursued.

In the event of any persisting conflict between the PhD student and his/her supervisors (or the director(s) of his/her research unit), the director of his/her doctoral school must be informed, regardless of the thesis work already carried out. The doctoral school director may then call upon the services of a mediator or set up a mediation committee; without freeing anyone of his/her responsibilities, this mediator or committee shall listen to all parties and propose one or more solutions acceptable to everyone concerned, so as to allow for the student's completion of his/her thesis. The mediator's mission necessitates his/her impartiality. The mediator must be chosen from among the directors or administrators of the laboratory or doctoral school.

Should this initial attempt at mediation fail, the PhD student and the director(s) of his/her research unit or doctoral school may request the head of the operating institution to nominate, via the institution's research commission, a new mediator or mediating committee from outside the doctoral school. If at the end of this procedure it appears that the thesis may not be prepared as foreplanned or that it must be interrupted, all of the concerned parties must be duly informed.

If the PhD student so wishes, he/she may be assisted, at each stage of this procedure, by an elected PhD student representative, chosen from his/her doctoral school or from a committee of his/her registration institution.

In the event of the thesis being interrupted (for instance, in the event of a voluntary abandonment of the thesis), the PhD student may request a "research certificate" from the director(s) of his/her research unit. This certificate shall specify the nature and duration of the work carried out, as well as the context of the research.

## **7. Temporary and miscellaneous provisions**

The present charter applies to all new doctoral theses of the Université de Lyon that are begun during the 2016-2017 academic year or later.





## PhD Charter of the Université de Lyon

### Signature protocole

I undersigned (**NAME of the PhD student**):

Have taken note of the PhD Charter and I am committed to respecting it.

Date and signature:

I undersigned (**NAME of the thesis director**):

Have taken note of the PhD Charter and I am committed to respecting it.

Date and signature of the supervisor:

I undersigned (**NAME of the thesis co-director**):

Have taken note of the PhD Charter and I am committed to respecting it.

Date and signature:

**NAME of the director of the research unit:**

Date and signature :