



## **Thesis Charter of the Université de Lyon**

### **Preamble**

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

This charter specifies these reciprocal commitments, by reviewing the deontology inspiring the regulations in effect and tried-and-tested practices, with due regard to the diversity of disciplines, doctoral schools and institutions. Its objective is to guarantee a high level of scientific quality.

PhD institutions and doctoral school directors are committed to ensuring that the principles laid out in the present charter are respected during thesis preparation. Special attention must be accorded to recommendations established for jointly supervised theses.

At the time of registration, this charter is signed by the PhD student, along with his/her thesis director, the director of the host laboratory and the director of the doctoral school. 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 in the internal rules and regulations of each doctoral school.

### **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.

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<sup>1</sup> Here and throughout the present charter, the term "thesis director" shall apply to both the director and any co-directors of a thesis.

The PhD student's research work constitutes a veritable professional activity carried out within the framework of a laboratory and a doctoral school, both attached to a Université de Lyon institution. The doctoral degree validates the training and education received. The PhD student is therefore considered a member of the research team in the process of acquiring recognized professional experience. From an administrative point of view, the PhD student retains his/her status as a student.

To correctly carry out his/her research work, the PhD student must have available 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 fixed-term employment contracts. If the PhD student's funding is provided by a professional activity not directly linked to the thesis (e.g., teaching), one must ensure that this activity allows the student sufficient time for properly pursuing his/her thesis. Institutions reserve the right to require a minimum level of funding for PhD programme registration. Three-year financing plans must be elaborated during the initial registration and specified within the thesis contract. Research work assigned to the student must be compatible with the duration of funding.

The provision of information must be lent particular attention. Doctoral schools commit themselves to maintaining a website and communicating to PhD students all information regarding: the training and education provided during the thesis, possible career opportunities available to PhD holders and the future evolution of PhD holders. This information will notably allow the student to rapidly define his/her professional integration project, which will then be further specified throughout the thesis. During the pursuit of the thesis, and for their further information and training, PhD students will be required to take professional integration modules according to the provisions laid down by the doctoral school and the Université de Lyon; they will also be required to participate in activities and events organized by the doctoral school at Lyon and Saint-Étienne sites. To facilitate the gathering of information and the monitoring of PhD holders, each PhD holder undertakes to inform the doctoral school regarding the evolution of his/her professional career during a period of four years following graduation.

## **2. Defining the subject and thesis feasibility**

The thesis subject entails carrying out a personalized training project, ideally to be completed within the three-year time limit.

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

The thesis director is active at a contractualized research unit (joint research unit, "host team", etc.), possesses a recognized mastery of the relevant research field, and must assist the PhD student in specifying from the outset – via a "state of the question" or any other appropriate method – the unique, innovative nature of the thesis subject within the scientific context, while also ensuring its topicality and its possible promotion/dissemination. This dialogue phase must ultimately:

- Reveal the innovative, topical nature of the proposed thesis subject within the scientific context ("state of the art" analysis), and evaluate the perspectives for professional career opportunities.
- Inform the PhD student regarding the subject's inherent constraints and limitations.
- Present to the PhD student the "host team" (teachers, researchers and technicians, as well as number of PhD students, programmes, funding, etc.) and the significance of the project within the scientific context of the "host team".
- Map out the principal stages of the thesis project (scientific work and promotion/ dissemination).
- Envisage possible external collaborations and the PhD student's international mobility.
- Envisage with the PhD student the means of financing (e.g., grants) to ensure the student's material autonomy and the student's capacity to properly carry out his/her work during the duration of the thesis preparation.

This dialogue results in the writing up of a research project elaborated by the PhD student and supervised by the thesis director.

The thesis director commits him/herself to specifying the means (useful information 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 host research unit or laboratory. In order to accomplish his/her research work, the PhD student enjoys access, whenever possible, to the same facilities as tenured researchers: access to equipment and means (notably computer equipment), access to documentation, the possibility to attend seminars and conferences, and the possibility to present his/her work at scientific meetings (whether "PhD student congresses" or larger gatherings).

The PhD student commits him/herself to:

- Respecting the provisions made, at the time of registration, regarding the subject, duration and schedule of the thesis project.
- Regularly updating the thesis director on the progress of his/her work.
- Regularly updating the laboratory and doctoral school on the evolution of his/her research.
- Respecting the established deontology, particularly the authenticity of his/her thesis, as well as the confidentiality of certain work, if applicable.
- Respecting a certain number of "community rules" shared by all members of the "host team".
- Diligently pursuing the training and activities for which he/she is registered.

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

#### **Role and commitments of the thesis director**

The future PhD student must be informed of the number of theses currently supervised by the director he/she approaches, as well as the "maximum number of students to supervisors" ratios recommended at 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; the director undertakes dedicating a significant amount of time to this task.

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

The PhD student must be able to meet with his/her thesis director as often as is necessary.

The thesis director commits him/herself to regularly monitoring the student's work and considering new directions to explore given the ever evolving results. The thesis director has the obligation to inform the PhD student regarding any positive assessments or, conversely, objections and criticisms liable to be provoked by the student's work, notably during the thesis defence.

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

### **Role and commitments of the doctoral school**

The doctoral school ensures its mission of monitoring and training its PhD students. It organizes training programmes complementing those offered by the Université de Lyon and informs PhD students of all scientific activities liable to interest them.

### **Pursuing the thesis**

The initial agreement must make provision for the holding of regular meetings. To the greatest extent possible, the setting up of a thesis monitoring committee (or some other measure for monitoring the proper progress of the thesis) must be ensured.

### **Jury and thesis defence**

The regulations and provisions concerning the makeup of the jury and the thesis defence must conform to current legislation.

The thesis director proposes – in consultation with the PhD student and via the director of the doctoral school – the makeup of the jury and the thesis defence date to the head of the institution, in accordance with the legislation in effect (Order of 7 August 2006 relative to doctoral instruction and Modified Order of 6 January 2005 relative to international, jointly-supervised theses). The defence must be held at the registration institution (exceptions to this rule must receive the prior approval of the institution of registration).

### **Abandoning a thesis**

In the event of a thesis being abandoned, the PhD student must inform the thesis director, as well as the director of the doctoral school. The PhD student may request the director of the host laboratory 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.

## **4. Thesis duration**

As a stage in the research process, the thesis must respect the established schedule, in accordance with the spirit of doctoral studies and in the PhD student's own interest.

The thesis duration is ideally three years for a full-time PhD student.

At the end of the second year, the expected defence date must be discussed based upon the progress of the research work carried out. An additional year

may be granted by the head of the institution, in consultation with the doctoral school director, following a reasoned request by the PhD student and the thesis director. This agreement does not signify the automatic prolongation of the student's funding; however, the concerned parties must explore all possible avenues of further assistance.

Exemptions allowing for thesis durations of over four years may be granted in particular situations:

- PhD students pursuing their thesis part-time due to an external professional activity (particularly a full-time teaching position).
- The special nature of research inherent to certain fields.
- The existence of a particular risk.

Extensions may also be granted in the event of a maternity leave, an extended illness leave or a work-related accident.

In all cases, an extension shall entail an amendment to the PhD student's administrative dossier.

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.

## **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.

These standards shall be discussed and understood prior to registration: the thesis director must explain what is expected with regard to publications, what the scientific community (particularly the 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 host laboratory. If a particular confidentiality clause exists, it must be clearly specified in the thesis project.

Following the thesis defence, the PhD student shall provide his/her thesis director with the duly corrected manuscript, along with an electronic version.

## **6. Mediation procedure**

In the event of a persistent dispute between the PhD student and his/her thesis director (or laboratory director), the director of the appropriate doctoral school must be informed, no matter the progress made on the thesis. The doctoral school director may then call upon the services of a mediator, who – without freeing anyone of his/her responsibilities – listens to all parties and proposes one or more solutions 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. In the event of this initial mediation procedure failing, the PhD student or another signatory to this charter may request the director of the concerned institution to authorize the scientific committee to name a mediator from outside the institution. If, following his/her mission, this second mediator judges that the initially planned thesis project cannot continue at the current laboratory, he/she must inform all concerned parties (the PhD student, the thesis director, the laboratory director, the doctoral school director and the institution head).

As in the case of a voluntary thesis abandonment, the PhD student may request the director of the host laboratory for a "research certificate". This certificate shall specify the nature and duration of the work carried out, as well as the context of the research, and may be used at the student's discretion.

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

For theses already underway, provisions concerning thesis defence, publication and mediation shall apply from the beginning of the university's 2009-2010 academic year.

## **UCBL Amendment to the Université de Lyon Thesis Charter**

### **1. FUNDING OF THE THESIS AND PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION**

The PhD student's means of funding must be specified at the end of the charter. If this funding is provided, even partially, by another paid activity, this activity must be relevant to the student's research work. In any case, the methods of funding must ensure living and working conditions that are compatible with the demands of the student's doctoral training. The host laboratory is responsible for ensuring that the minimum amount of funding specified in the student's doctoral contract is attained (see Article 12 of Decree n° 2009-464 of 23 April 2009 relative to contractual PhD students from public higher education or research institutions). Should the funding body or organization fail to meet its obligations during the thesis, the thesis director, the research unit director and the head of the doctoral school are obligated to seek out a solution.

The means to be implemented to facilitate the PhD student's professional integration depend upon the clarity of his/her commitments: the student must inform his/her thesis director of his/her intention to apply for any jobs, particularly at a public institution (state research bodies, universities and Grande Écoles).

At the same time, it is incumbent upon the PhD student to actively search for a future job by contacting possible employers (laboratories, universities and companies, in France or abroad), while relying on the support of the doctoral school and the university.

### **2. THESIS SUBJECT**

The thesis subject leads the PhD student to carry out research work that is both unique and educational, and which is completed within a specified time limit. The specific subject chosen relies upon the agreement between the PhD student, his/her thesis director and his/her co-supervisor (if applicable), and is duly formalized at the time of registration. The thesis director and the co-supervisor (if applicable) are chosen for their recognized expertise in the relevant research field, and must assist the PhD student in clearly identifying a thesis subject that is at once topical and innovative within the scientific context; they must also encourage the PhD student to demonstrate an inclination for innovation.

The thesis subject must be accompanied by a research project, which clearly specifies:

- The current state of knowledge within the concerned field.
- The position occupied by the project within the host research unit or team.
- The scientific objectives and various stages of the project.
- The means and methods to be implemented, as well as any possible outside partnerships or collaborations.
- Possibilities for the PhD student's educational training.

The PhD student must be trained to communicate and discuss his/her research results via at least one presentation during a national or international conference.



The PhD student has the right to be heard, to vote and to be represented at laboratory council meetings and assemblies. He/she has access to the university's shared facilities and common services, as well as to social services in accordance with his/her status. He/she receives the same medical attention as the other members of the research unit and/or receives preventive medical attention.

The PhD student agrees to provide the host research unit with all documents, samples, data and results linked to his/her research work.

The PhD student cannot be expected to compensate for any insufficiencies regarding the laboratory's technical supervision, and may not be attributed any tasks unrelated to the pursuit of his/her thesis.

For his/her part, the PhD student commits him/herself to respecting the established work schedule. The student is obligated to keep his/her thesis director and co-supervisor (if applicable) up to date regarding any difficulties encountered and the progress of his/her thesis. The student must demonstrate initiative in carrying out his/her research.

### **3. THESIS DURATION**

The normal duration for preparing a thesis is three years.

### **4. PUBLICATION AND DISSEMINATION OF THE THESIS**

A careful written record of the PhD student's research work must be kept in a "laboratory notebook" respecting all standards of chronological monitoring and confidentiality. This notebook remains the property of the host laboratory and may be produced to authenticate a discovery and ensure the promotion/dissemination of the research carried out.

The quality and impact of a thesis can be measured by the publications or the patents and industrial reports derived from the PhD student's work (whether the thesis itself or articles written during or following the paper's preparation). The PhD student is responsible for writing articles for which he/she is the first author; the thesis director (or the co-supervisor) must provide the student with the necessary knowledge and skills for the writing of these articles. The student is also the co-author of all publications in which his/her research work is or will be used in an unprecedented manner.