

# Ordinance on Course Units and Performance Assessments at ETH Zurich

(ETH Zurich Ordinance on Performance Assessments)

22 May 2012 (Version: 1 August 2012)

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[This English translation is for information purposes only and has no legal force. The German version is the legally binding document.]

*The Executive Board of ETH Zurich (Executive Board),*  
pursuant to Art. 3, Para. 1 (b) of the ETHZ-EPFL Ordinance of 13 November 2003<sup>1</sup>,  
*decrees:*

## Chapter 1 General regulations

### Art. 1 Subject and scope

<sup>1</sup> This ordinance applies to all course units and performance assessment in the Bachelor's and Master's degree programmes at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH Zurich).

<sup>2</sup> It also applies to:

- a. exchange students, visiting students and special students who attend course units at ETH Zurich and undertake performance assessments.
- b. the degree programmes of the didactics programme, unless the corresponding programme regulations stipulate otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> Programmes of university continuing education are governed by Articles 6, 13, 14, 23, 29 and 30 of this ordinance, unless the Executive Board issues differing stipulations.

<sup>4</sup> Doctoral qualifying examinations and doctoral examinations are governed by Articles 3, 6, 8–10, 13, 14, 23, 29 and 30 of this ordinance, unless the Ordinance on Doctoral Studies ETH Zurich of 1 July 2008<sup>2</sup> stipulates otherwise. This ordinance does not apply to doctoral studies at ETH Zurich. However, the cognisant department may declare certain of its stipulations applicable.

<sup>5</sup> This ordinance does not apply to course units and performance assessments governed by stipulations issued outside the ETH domain, including in particular course units and performance assessments conducted by other universities.

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<sup>1</sup> SR 414.110.37

<sup>2</sup> SR 414.133.1

## **Art. 2** Concepts

In this ordinance the following definitions apply:

- a. *Bachelor's degree studies*: The first level of studies, comprising 180 European Credit Transfer System (ECTS) credits and concluding with the Bachelor's degree;
- b. *Master's degree studies*: The second level of studies, comprising 90 or 120 ECTS credits and concluding with the Master's degree;
- c. *Course unit*: One or more courses which are examined as a unit and for which a certain number of ECTS credits are awarded as a whole;
- d. *Performance assessment*: Every procedure via which student performance is measured and evaluated, in particular examinations, examination blocks and written papers;
- e. *Examination*: Procedure via which the mastery of the material covered in a one- or two-semester course unit is tested and awarded a grade;
- f. *Examination block*: A grouping of several examinations which must be undertaken during the same examination session and whose resulting individual grades are computed to produce an average grade;
- g. *Examination session*: An examination period of several weeks during the semester break, during which session examinations take place;
- h. *Semester-end examination phase*: An examination period of several weeks which includes the final weeks of the semester and the first weeks of the subsequent semester break, during which end-of-semester performance assessments (in particular end-of-semester examinations) take place;
- i. *First-year examination*: The examination which concludes the first year of the Bachelor's degree programme;
- j. *Academic deadlines*: All official academic deadlines, in particular deadlines pertaining to the maximum permitted duration of studies in Bachelor's/Master's degree programmes and didactic degree programmes; deadlines regarding registration for and deregistration from performance assessments; deadlines for undertaking performance assessments; and individual deadlines set by the Rector. Submission deadlines for semester papers and Bachelor's/Master's theses are not considered academic deadlines.

## **Chapter 2** General stipulations on performance assessments

### **Section 1** Information supplied to students

#### **Art. 3** Binding character of performance assessment notifications

Notifications regarding performance assessments are binding as soon as they

- a. are retrievable from the ETH email address supplied to each student at matriculation;
- b. have been submitted in writing; or
- c. have been published in an appropriate form, notably on the ETH Zurich website.

## **Art. 4** Course Catalogue

<sup>1</sup> Every department lists the following details in the Course Catalogue for every course unit it offers:

- a. Number, title, semester, type, number of hours per semester week, lecturer(s), examiners;
- b. Learning content and learning objectives;
- c. Allocation to one or several course unit categories;
- d. Any attendance prerequisites;
- e. Number of credits measured according to the credit system guidelines issued by the Rector;
- f. Language of instruction of the course unit and the language of the respective performance assessment;
- g. Form and timing of the performance assessment (session examination, end-of-semester performance assessment or assessment of semester performance);
- h. Any prerequisites for admission to the performance assessment;
- i. Mode (written/oral) and duration of the performance assessment;
- j. Aids permitted during the performance assessment.

<sup>2</sup> These details are binding as soon as the semester begins. In exceptional well-grounded cases the Rector may approve changes, provided that the request for the change is submitted before the deadline for registering for performance assessments given in Art. 9, Para. 1. Retro-spective changes are issued according to the procedures mentioned in Art. 3. Requests submitted late will not be considered.

<sup>3</sup> If a course unit offered by another department is listed in the Course Catalogue the details provided by that department for said course unit must be included there.

<sup>4</sup> The details described in Para. 1 (d)–(g) require the approval of the Rector.

## **Section 2 Performance assessments; performance evaluation; credits**

### **Art. 5** Modalities of performance assessment

<sup>1</sup> The modalities of a particular performance assessment, especially its form, timing, mode, duration, content, language and permitted aids, are uniform for all students.

<sup>2</sup> The modalities are set by the department which conducts the performance assessment in question. The regulations of the course unit as last taught apply.

<sup>3</sup> With the consent of the Rector it is possible to deviate from the policy set out in Para. 1, particularly in the area of performance assessments which

- a. must be undertaken as a requirement for admission to a Master's degree programme;
- b. are undertaken by students with disabilities;

- c. are undertaken by students who on cogent academically-related grounds including exchange stays or compulsory internships cannot sit performance assessments on the set date.

<sup>4</sup> Any deviations from the policy set out in Para. 1 must remain true to the aim of the performance assessment.

#### **Art. 6** Performance evaluation

<sup>1</sup> Performance is evaluated with a grade or a 'pass/fail' assessment.

<sup>2</sup> The highest grade is 6 and the lowest 1. Sufficient performance is awarded a grade between 4 to 6, insufficient performance a grade below 4. Half- and quarter-grades are permitted. Grade averages are rounded to two decimal points.

<sup>3</sup> The systems governing grades awarded by other universities and listed in the academic record may deviate from that in Para. 2.

<sup>4</sup> An examination block is passed if the average of the weighted grades is at least a 4. The weighting of the individual examinations of an examination block is set out in the respective programme regulations. Any further conditions for passing an examination block are not admissible.

#### **Art. 7** Acquisition of credits; exclusion from degree programmes

<sup>1</sup> ECTS credits are only awarded for sufficient performance.

<sup>2</sup> Persons will be excluded from a degree programme who

- a. can no longer acquire the number of ECTS credits required to complete the respective degree programme;
- b. have exceeded the stipulated maximum number of failed performance assessments in a particular course unit category; or
- c. have exceeded the maximum permitted duration of studies.

<sup>3</sup> Further prerequisites for obtaining the degree are set out in the respective programme regulations.

### **Section 3 Admission; registration and deregistration; interruption and absence; late submission; unethical behaviour**

#### **Art. 8** Admission

<sup>1</sup> Only matriculated students and special students are admitted to performance assessments. The Rector may grant exceptions to the matriculation rule if the difficulty of administrative procedures to effect it would be disproportionate.

<sup>2</sup> Further prerequisites for admission to a particular performance assessment may be stipulated in the programme regulations or the Course Catalogue.

<sup>3</sup> In consultation with the departments, the Rector determines the permitted types of admission prerequisites and the modalities of the admission procedure.

#### **Art. 9** Registration and deregistration

<sup>1</sup> The Rector determines the location, deadline and further modalities of registration for session examinations and for the performance assessments to be undertaken during the end-of-semester examination phase.

<sup>2</sup> The Rector determines the maximum permitted number of session examinations for which a student may register per examination session. The Rector may approve individual requests for exceptions if cogent grounds are given.

<sup>3</sup> Registration for session examinations may be withdrawn without giving reasons up to seven days before the beginning of the examination session. If the examinations in question are part of an examination block deregistration applies to the entire examination block.

<sup>4</sup> In consultation with the departments, the Rector determines the deadline by which registration for one of the performance assessments held during the end-of-semester examination phase may be withdrawn without giving reasons.

<sup>5</sup> If a student is subject to an individual registration deadline requirement, reasons must be given for withdrawal. The Rector will decide whether these reasons are sufficient. If they are not, the student must undertake the performance assessment on the scheduled date. If the student does not comply, Art. 10, Para. 4 applies.

<sup>6</sup> The Rector determines the consequences of neglecting deadlines for registration/deregistration.

<sup>7</sup> The content of Para. 1–6 is communicated to students by email or published in appropriate form, notably on the ETH Zurich website.

#### **Art. 10** Interruption and absence

<sup>1</sup> Participation in an examination session or an end-of-semester examination phase may only be interrupted on cogent grounds, such as illness or accident.

<sup>2</sup> Students who are forced to break off an examination session or end-of-semester examination phase must inform the Examinations Office immediately and provide the necessary attestation.

<sup>3</sup> If performance assessments are interrupted, all those performance assessments which have already been completed remain valid. Those completed examinations which are part of an examination block will be taken into account when said examination block is resumed.

<sup>4</sup> If no grounds or insufficient grounds are given for absence from a performance assessment, this performance assessment is regarded as failed. If the examination forms part of an examination block, the entire block is failed. Such cases are recorded as ‘no show’ in the transcript.

<sup>5</sup> The validity of grounds supplied is ruled on by the following persons:

- a. Session examinations and performance assessments undertaken during the end-of-semester examination phase: the Rector
- b. Other performance assessments: the Director of Studies

#### **Art. 11**            Late submission

<sup>1</sup> Written work submitted late, particularly semester papers or Bachelor’s/Master’s theses, will receive a fail grade. This will be recorded as ‘no show’ in the transcript.

<sup>2</sup> The Director of Studies may extend the submission deadline on cogent grounds such as illness or accident.

#### **Art. 12**            Request for extension of an academic deadline

<sup>1</sup> The Rector determines the deadline for submitting requests for extension of academic deadlines. The Rector may extend an academic deadline on cogent grounds such as illness or accident. Deadlines for submitting requests are published appropriately, in particular on the ETH Zurich website.

<sup>2</sup> Requests submitted late will not be considered.

#### **Art. 13**            Unethical behaviour

Sanctions imposed in cases of unethical behaviour are governed by the ETH Zurich Disciplinary Code of 2 November 2004.<sup>3</sup>

### **Section 4**            **Repetition of performance assessments**

#### **Art. 14**

<sup>1</sup> A failed performance assessment may only be repeated once.

<sup>2</sup> If the failed performance assessment is part of an examination block the entire examination block must be repeated.

<sup>3</sup> To repeat a performance assessment the affected student may be required to attend the corresponding course unit again. Excepted are course units examined in the first-year examinations or in an examination block.

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<sup>3</sup> SR 414.138.1

<sup>4</sup> If a performance assessment is repeated, all of its modalities are subject to the stipulations which applied to the course unit as last taught.

<sup>5</sup> A performance assessment may only be repeated after notification that it has been failed.

<sup>6</sup> A passed performance assessment may not be repeated, with the exception of those indicated in Art. 43, Para. 6 of the ETH Zurich Admissions Ordinance of 30 November 2010.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>7</sup> If it is not possible to repeat the performance assessment of a course unit, the Director of Studies determines whether and via what academic efforts the associated ECTS credits can be obtained.

## **Section 5      Recognition of study achievements and waiving of performance assessments**

### **Art. 15      Policy**

The academic achievements of students from other universities or other ETH Zurich degree programmes, and of students who re-enter ETH Zurich, may be recognised on admission and the corresponding performance assessments waived. The stipulations of the ETH Zurich Admissions Ordinance of 30 November 2010<sup>5</sup> apply.

### **Art. 16      Recognition of transcripts of record from host universities**

<sup>1</sup> The performance assessments passed during an exchange stay at a host university are recognised if the pertaining study programme was drawn up in advance with the Director of Studies. The study programme may be altered during the exchange stay with the approval of the Director of Studies.

<sup>2</sup> The respective programme regulations can allocate the task described in Para. 1 to persons other than the Director of Studies.

<sup>3</sup> The Rector determines the method of computing grades awarded according to other grading scales.

<sup>4</sup> If the performance assessments undertaken at the host university are part of examination blocks to be completed at ETH Zurich, their average grades will be computed together with the individual grades received at ETH Zurich.

<sup>5</sup> If an examination block is failed the entire block must be repeated at ETH Zurich.

<sup>6</sup> Proof of academic achievement from another university will normally be listed in the academic record in the original form, with mention of the host university.

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<sup>4</sup> SR 414.131.52

<sup>5</sup> SR 414.131.52

## **Section 6**      **Examiners**

### **Art. 17**      Examiners

<sup>1</sup> Performance assessments are conducted by the lecturer(s) who taught the corresponding course unit. If the examination cannot be conducted by a lecturer because of illness or professional impediment, the Director of Studies of the department offering it may at any time designate other qualified examiners.

<sup>2</sup> Students have no right to be examined by a particular examiner.

<sup>3</sup> If a course unit is taught by several lecturers the Director of Studies determines the examiner in charge and informs the Rector of the decision by the beginning of the semester at the latest.

<sup>4</sup> Examiners have the following tasks unless the programme regulations stipulate otherwise:

- a. They select the subject matter of the performance assessment.
- b. They inform students as to the subject matter of the performance assessment if the latter deviates from the subject matter of the course unit.
- c. They formulate the questions.
- d. They conduct the performance assessment.
- e. They evaluate students' performance.
- f. They apply to the grading conference for the grade, if said grade was awarded for an examination in the context of Art. 19.

<sup>5</sup> The information indicated in Para. 4 (b) should be conveyed by letter, email, in written form during class or via publication in the Course Catalogue. This must take place at least four weeks before the performance assessment and in any case before the end of the semester.

### **Art. 18**      Observers

<sup>1</sup> If an oral performance assessment is conducted by a single examiner, an observer must be present.

<sup>2</sup> The examiner selects the observer from his/her group of assistants, scientific staff or other qualified persons unless the programme regulations stipulate otherwise.

<sup>3</sup> The observer helps the examiner to conduct the oral examinations correctly and records the proceedings in an appropriate form for the grading conference and any appeals procedures.

<sup>4</sup> If a performance assessment is conducted by two or more examiners, one of them assumes the role of observer.



**Art. 19**          Grading conference; exercise of discretion

<sup>1</sup> For the first-year examinations and for each examination block the involved examiners and the Director of Studies convene a grading conference.

<sup>2</sup> The grading conference is chaired by the Director of Studies.

<sup>3</sup> On the basis of requests from examiners the grading conference decides how individual examinations are to be evaluated. This decision is taken when the first-year examinations or an examination block have all been completed.

<sup>4</sup> A student representative is invited to every grading conference, where he/she has observer status. Internal departmental regulations stipulate the details.

<sup>5</sup> In the context of further examinations where failure can result in exclusion from the degree programme, the department must convene a grading conference or deploy other suitable measures to ensure that examiners evaluate performance in accordance with regulations.

**Section 7**          **Reporting of results; disagreements**

**Art. 20**

<sup>1</sup> The results of first-year examinations are communicated to students in writing.

<sup>2</sup> Students may view all other performance evaluations on the internet via the corresponding ETH Zurich application. They are notified periodically by email when their results are viewable.

<sup>3</sup> The notification explains the procedure in cases of disagreement.

**Section 8**          **Organisation of performance assessments and examination schedules**

**Art. 21**          Organisation of performance assessments

<sup>1</sup> The Rectorate organises the session examinations and determines their dates.

<sup>2</sup> In consultation with the departments, the Rector determines

- a. the organisational cognisance of those performance assessments which take place outside of the examination sessions;
- b. the starting dates and duration of the examination sessions and the end-of-semester examination phases.

## **Art. 22** Examination schedules

<sup>1</sup> The Rectorate issues examination schedules for the session examinations.

<sup>2</sup> When the examination schedules are complete, students and examiners are informed by email that they may now view their personal examination plans on the internet via the corresponding ETH Zurich application.

<sup>3</sup> The personal examination plan is binding for both student and examiner.

<sup>4</sup> If for reasons of (e.g.) illness or accident an oral examination cannot be held on the scheduled date, the affected student(s) and examiner(s) may arrange individual changes of date within the examination session. The person who initiates the change must inform the Examinations Office immediately in writing.

<sup>5</sup> The dates of written examinations may not be changed.

## **Section 9** Copyright and archiving

### **Art. 23**

<sup>1</sup> Any person who authors written work such as a semester paper or a Bachelor's/Master's thesis or creates models or computer programmes in the context of a performance assessment is regarded as the author of the corresponding work under copyright law.

<sup>2</sup> The works mentioned in Para. 1 may be archived by the respective ETH Zurich organisational units and – provided that copyright law allows – put to further use or returned to the copyright holder. Any returns may only proceed two years or later following the notification of results. If procedures in that regard are pending, return may only proceed two years following the final legal decision on the result.

<sup>3</sup> Other written performance assessments and notes on oral examinations are stored for two years following notification of the results and then destroyed. If procedures are pending, the pertaining documents may only be destroyed two years following the final legal decision on the result.

## **Chapter 3** Particular stipulations for Bachelor's and Master's degree levels

### **Art. 24** First-year examinations

<sup>1</sup> First-year examinations are all conducted during the same examination session.

<sup>2</sup> They must, including any repetitions, be completed within two years of commencement of studies. The first attempt must be made in the summer examination session immediately following the end of the first year of studies or, at the latest, during the winter examination session following.

<sup>3</sup> If cogent grounds (e.g. illness or accident) prevent this, the Rector may extend the deadline and take further measures if necessary.

<sup>4</sup> If leave is approved, the Rector may extend the deadline by one semester at most.

<sup>5</sup> Persons are definitively excluded from a Bachelor's degree programme who

- a. have failed the first-year examinations twice;
- b. have wilfully neglected the deadlines set out in Para. 2–4.

<sup>6</sup> Students may undertake further performance assessments if programme regulations allow this even before they have passed the first-year examinations. Any admission requirements still apply.

<sup>7</sup> If a student repeats the first year of studies voluntarily without sitting the first-year examinations the Rector may, on request, extend the deadline given in Para. 2 by one semester at most, and take other measures if necessary. The respective request may only be submitted once, and only after completing the first year of studies for the first time. The maximum permitted duration of Bachelor's degree studies remains unaffected.

## **Art. 25** Bachelor's thesis

<sup>1</sup> Programme regulations may stipulate the writing of a Bachelor's thesis.

<sup>2</sup> The timing and duration of the Bachelor's thesis are organised such that the normal duration of studies guarantees progression to the Master's degree level without delays.

<sup>3</sup> The Bachelor's thesis is graded.

<sup>4</sup> The Bachelor's thesis is allocated a certain number of ECTS credits, which comprise part of the number required to obtain the Bachelor's degree.

<sup>5</sup> If a Bachelor's thesis is repeated, a new topic must be chosen.

## **Art. 26** Master's thesis

<sup>1</sup> A Master's thesis must be written for every Master's degree programme.

<sup>2</sup> The duration of the Master's thesis project is four to six months and is set out in the programme regulations. The programme regulations may envision a longer period, particularly if the Master's thesis is connected with other work in the framework of an internship.

<sup>3</sup> The Master's thesis is graded.

<sup>4</sup> The programme regulations may stipulate prerequisites for commencing the Master's thesis.

<sup>5</sup> The Master's thesis is allocated a certain number of ECTS credits, which comprise part of the number required to obtain the Master's degree.

<sup>6</sup> If a Master's thesis is repeated, a new topic must be chosen.

## **Chapter 4      Maximum duration of studies and degree documents**

### **Art. 27            Maximum duration of studies**

<sup>1</sup> Persons who satisfy the prerequisites set out in the programme regulations may submit a request for the Bachelor's/Master's degree to the department responsible for the degree programme.

<sup>2</sup> The following deadlines pertain to this request:

- a. The Bachelor's degree must be requested within five years of commencing the respective Bachelor's degree programme.
- b. The Master's degree must be requested
  1. (if 90 ECTS credits are required to obtain the degree) within three years of commencing the respective Master's degree programme.
  2. (if 120 ECTS credits are required to obtain the degree) within four years of commencing the respective Master's degree programme.

<sup>3</sup> The programme regulations may extend deadlines if

- a. in order to obtain the degree the student must complete a professional or industrial internship of several months for which no credits are issued;
- b. admission to the Master's degree programme is conditional upon additional requirements pursuant to Art. 33 (b) of the Admissions Ordinance ETH Zurich of 30 November 2010.<sup>6</sup>

<sup>4</sup> On cogent grounds such as illness or accident the Rector may extend the deadlines set out in Para. 2 and 3. The stipulations of Art. 43, Para. 7 of the Admissions Ordinance ETH Zurich of 30 November 2010<sup>7</sup> still apply.

### **Art. 28            Certificate, academic record and Diploma Supplement**

<sup>1</sup> Persons who obtain the Bachelor's or Master's degree receive a certificate, an academic record and a Diploma Supplement.

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<sup>6</sup> SR 414.131.52

<sup>7</sup> SR 414.131.52

<sup>2</sup> On the certificate are

- a. the graduate's personal details;
- b. the academic title awarded;
- c. details of any special training;
- d. the signatures of the Rector of ETH Zurich and the head of the respective department;
- e. the official seal of ETH Zurich.

<sup>3</sup> For cross-university degree programmes ETH Zurich and the participating universities may issue a joint certificate which may differ from that described in Para. 2. The details must be set out in an agreement between the universities involved.

<sup>4</sup> For didactic degree programmes or other special degree programmes the certificate may differ from that described in Para. 2. The details must be set out in the corresponding programme regulations.

<sup>5</sup> The Rector determines the details to be listed in the academic record and the Diploma Supplement.

## **Chapter 5      Legal rights**

### **Art. 29            Inspection of performance assessment records**

<sup>1</sup> Students who have completed a performance assessment may view their performance assessment documents for a period of up to six months after notification of the grade.

<sup>2</sup> Viewing must comply with Art. 26 of the *Verwaltungsverfahrensgesetz* [administrative procedure act, in German] of 20 December 1968.<sup>8</sup>

### **Art. 30            Administrative appeals**

Appeals to decrees proceeding from this ordinance or the programme regulations may be lodged with the ETH Appeals Commission within 30 days after said decree is received.

## **Chapter 6      Programme regulations and pilot projects**

### **Art. 31            Programme regulations**

<sup>1</sup> The respective department must apply to the Executive Board for permission to issue a set of programme regulations for each Bachelor's and Master's degree programme.

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<sup>8</sup> SR 172.021

<sup>2</sup> The programme regulations comprise stipulations regarding

- a. the structure of the degree programme into course unit categories;
- b. the prerequisites for applying for the Bachelor's/Master's degree;
- c. any prerequisites for admission to performance assessments;
- d. the performance assessments belonging to the respective degree programme, the examinations included in the first-year examinations, and (if any) the grouping of several examinations to examination blocks;
- e. the general type and duration of the Master's thesis and (if any) the Bachelor's thesis;
- f. the exact academic title, in German and English;
- g. computation of the final grade.

<sup>3</sup> The programme regulations may contain further stipulations regarding (e.g.)

- a. the student's right to propose a theme for the Bachelor's/Master's thesis;
- b. the length of the Bachelor's/Master's thesis and its maximum preparation time;
- c. the admissibility of group work in performance assessments and measures for determining the individual's contribution.

#### **Art. 32** Pilot projects

Any short-term pilot project programme regulations which deviate from this ordinance take precedence.

### **Chapter 7** Final clauses

#### **Art. 33** Stipulations regarding implementation

The Rector issues the stipulations regarding implementation.

#### **Art. 34** Rescindment of previous regulations

The General Ordinance on Performance Assessments at ETH Zurich (AVL ETHZ) of 10 September 2002<sup>9</sup> is rescinded.

#### **Art. 35** Entry into force

This ordinance enters into force on 1 August 2012.

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<sup>9</sup> AS 2003 3069, 2009 3137