

## PAYS DE LA LOIRE PHD CHARTER

*Consolidated version following the meeting of the Doctoral Committee of 3 May 2022, validated on 23 May 2022.*

*This charter is signed by the PhD student and the PhD supervisor\*. Scanned copies must be kept by the PhD student, the PhD supervisor, the director of the research unit or host unit, the doctoral school, and the establishment of enrolment*

*\*Here and throughout the text, "PhD supervisor" is understood to mean the supervisory team, namely, the thesis supervisor, any co-supervisor(s)– in accordance with the first paragraph of Article 16 of the Decree of 25 May 2016 <sup>1</sup>setting the national framework for education and arrangements for awarding the national doctoral level diploma– and research advisers.*

To pursue a doctoral thesis, two freely signed agreements should be established: one between the PhD student and the PhD supervisor and the other between the PhD student, the PhD supervisor and the director of the research unit hosting the PhD student. These agreements cover the choice of subject and the working conditions necessary to progress research. As a consequence, the unit director, PhD supervisor and PhD student each have rights and responsibilities which must be stringently observed.

This charter sets out the reciprocal undertakings for each party, drawing on the ethics informing current legal requirements and established practices that reflect the diversity of disciplines and establishments. It establishes the conditions for support and supervision needed to guarantee successful completion of the PhD. The establishment where the PhD student is enrolled agrees to act in a way which upholds the principles of this charter.

This joint charter is approved at the start of the contract by the head of the doctoral school, the head of the host unit and the establishment of enrolment. It is signed by the PhD student and the PhD supervisor and validated by the doctoral school and the establishment of enrolment in the PhD enrolment application file.

### **1. THE THESIS, A STEP IN A PERSONAL AND PROFESSIONAL PROJECT**

Preparing a thesis is both a professional experience and a form of training in and through research. The thesis project must be consistent with the host unit's lines of development. It must be clearly defined by the PhD supervisor and the PhD student. This requires clear objectives and appropriate resources to achieve these objectives within the timescale of the doctoral programme.

The PhD student and the PhD supervisor must respect any texts governing doctoral studies, this charter, and their doctoral school's internal regulations. The latter specifies rules concerning enrolment for a PhD, support for doctoral students, the individual training plan, conditions for obtaining authorisation to defend a thesis, and procedures regarding any potential disputes between the PhD student and their supervisory team.

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<sup>1</sup>Decree of 25 May 2016 setting the national framework for education and arrangements for awarding the national doctoral level diploma <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000032587086/>  
Pays de la Loire Doctoral College

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### 1.1 Funding the PhD

Before the candidate enrolls, the PhD supervisor and the director of the doctoral school (or the site's deputy director) must provide information about the resources the host unit will allocate to guarantee a good quality research environment, and of possibilities for additional funding through project calls from the doctoral school and/or the establishment (e.g., calls for mobility).

The PhD supervisor must ensure that the PhD student has adequate resources to conduct their research activities in appropriate conditions.

For a full-time PhD, the minimum funding available must be greater than or equal to 80% of the net national monthly minimum wage. Each doctoral school has the right to stipulate a higher level of funding within their internal regulations. Priority must be given to funding in the form of an employment contract for a term of at least three years, starting from when the student first enrolls for a PhD. If a three-year funding plan is in place, this will be drawn up when the student first enrolls and specified in the training agreement and, if applicable, the co-supervision agreement.

Candidates wishing to self-fund a full-time PhD, in agreement with the PhD supervisor and the director of the host unit, must provide a signed declaration each year with details of the funding they have to complete their research within the three-year timeframe and where this funding comes from. Each doctoral school has the right to refuse to host self-funded doctoral students within their internal regulations.

If funding for a PhD comes from a professional activity not directly linked to the thesis (e.g., teaching or liberal profession), the PhD student should provide an annual statement of funding or a declaration from their employer that their work leaves them enough time to successfully complete a **part-time PhD**, within six or more years.

### 1.2 Individual training plan and additional training

To broaden their sphere of competences and disciplinary horizons, and to enhance future career prospects, PhD students must undertake a minimum of 100 hours training or equivalent while preparing their theses.

The award of PhD certifies the candidate's ability to produce new, high-level scientific knowledge and to acquire and master blocks of competences common to all doctors and relevant to their training through research. The PhD student must regularly review the competences they need to develop during their doctoral studies based on the six blocks of common competences<sup>2</sup> listed in the national directory of professional qualifications [Répertoire National De La Certification Professionnelle (RNCP)].

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<sup>2</sup>Decree of 22 February 2019 defining competences for PhD graduates and entering PhDs in the national directory of professional qualifications <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/JORFTEXT000038200990>

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### **1.2.1 Training and competences agreement**

Pursuant to this charter and in accordance with the applicable regulations, the PhD student and the PhD supervisor must sign a training agreement upon enrolment in the first year. This agreement will be updated annually on re-enrolment. Drawing up a training agreement should serve as an opportunity for the parties to come to an understanding about the conditions needed to complete the PhD project.

### **1.2.2 Individual training plan**

To support the PhD student with formalising their competences, identifying their training needs and building the portfolio required under the national regulations, the doctoral school and doctoral college will provide varied training opportunities. These opportunities include "scientific" and "disciplinary" training sessions, organised by each doctoral school and cross-disciplinary training on methodological and professional matters, organised by the site or by the regional doctoral college.

In line with the above rules, every PhD student draws up an individual training plan relevant to their studies, the specific nature of their thesis and their career aspirations. To this end, doctoral schools do not impose minimum proportions for hours of cross-disciplinary or disciplinary training. The PhD supervisor, individual supervisory committee and doctoral school will ensure that the PhD student's choices are appropriate.

Training in research ethics, scientific integrity and open science are a compulsory component of every PhD student's individual training plan. Contractual PhD students taking part in additional activities (teaching, commercialisation of research results, assessment, dissemination of technical and scientific information) must undertake any corresponding training offered as a priority by sites within the doctoral college. Training will be validated depending on the experiences gained.

PhD students can also choose training activities beyond those offered by doctoral schools and the doctoral college. These activities may be organised by external bodies (training organisations, employer establishments and partners in the doctoral project) or they could be enrichment activities (e.g., attendance at professional/trade fairs, activities to promote scientific and technical culture, participation in fora).

For jointly supervised and CIFRE PhDs, doctoral schools may adjust the number of additional obligatory training hours required depending on time spent with an academic or industrial partner. Training hours will be specified in the joint supervision or CIFRE agreement. For doctoral students whose employment is not connected to their PhD thesis, the number of hours will be specified according to the share of time allocated to their research activities. In their internal regulations, doctoral schools may grant PhD students a maximum exemption of

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20 training hours for research activities other than authoring articles (e.g., attending conferences, poster presentations, oral communications) according to criteria set by the school.

### **1.2.3 Research compendium and portfolio**

Professional research activities should be listed in a research compendium. This should include articles published, reviews written, patents, and attendance/presentations given at national and international conferences.

Additionally, in accordance with the Decree of 25 May 2016, the PhD student should create a portfolio which includes a personal list of all activities they have undertaken throughout their training (including teaching, dissemination of scientific and technical culture, technology transfer) and highlights the competences they have developed during their doctoral studies. The PhD student should update this portfolio regularly, drawing on their research compendium and their individual training plan.

A statement of training completed should be included in the portfolio. This should be drawn up by the PhD student and validated by the doctoral school. The establishment of enrolment may request this document when granting authorisation to defend a thesis.

### **1.3 Career continuation**

The candidate must receive information about academic and extra-academic career opportunities in their field. To this end, when the candidate first enrolls, the doctoral school must provide them with survey data on the professional outcomes of former PhD students.

During their doctoral studies, with the support of their supervisory team, doctoral school, and establishment of enrolment, the PhD student is responsible for taking early action to further their career by contacting potential future employers (e.g., research/R&D laboratories, businesses, sole traders, universities, research centres in France and overseas). To make sure they are well prepared to continue their career, the PhD student should therefore make every effort to take part in a range of events to promote their doctoral studies.

## **2. THESIS SUBJECT, PREPARATION AND FEASIBILITY**

The PhD supervisor, the establishment, and the director of the student's host unit must make sure that the subject of the proposed thesis is in keeping with the host unit's research interests. The PhD supervisor must clarify the original nature of the subject in a research context and ensure that it is of current relevance. They must also make sure that the research can be completed within the funding timescale for the PhD.

### **2.1 PhD duration**

Research tasks given to the PhD student must be able to be completed within three years for a full-time PhD and six years for a part-time PhD.

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The doctoral school will only grant extensions to these timescales in exceptional circumstances and having considered a recommendation from the PhD supervisor, drawn up in agreement with the PhD student. The decision to grant an extension does not, in any circumstances, involve automatic continuation of any funding the PhD student may have received. However, possibilities for grants can be explored, particularly with PhD students experiencing welfare or medical challenges.

To comply with the planned timescale for the thesis, the PhD student and PhD supervisor must respect their commitments regarding the working hours required. Repeated failures to meet these commitments should be noted in a jointly agreed statement from the PhD student and PhD supervisor and could lead to mediation procedures.

In accordance with the national regulations, in exceptional circumstances, and upon a substantiated request from the PhD student, the establishment of enrolment may grant a suspension in studies, on one occasion only and for a period of no more than one year. Any such suspension requires agreement from the employer, if applicable, and the opinion of the PhD supervisor and the head of the doctoral school.

### **2.2 PhD supervision**

#### *Part 1 = the supervision team*

In line with the applicable law, the PhD is prepared in a research unit attached to a doctoral school, under the responsibility of a thesis supervisor who is accredited to supervise research (HDR) and attached to the same research unit or same doctoral school.

Possible co-supervisors, accredited to supervise research (HDR), are not necessarily affiliated to the same doctoral school or the same research unit.

The supervisory team can be expanded to include members who are not accredited to supervise research - known as co-advisors - and who are not necessarily affiliated to the same doctoral school or the same research unit.

A researcher or lecturer-researcher, accredited to supervise research (HDR), can be attached to one doctoral school only. This will be either their unit's doctoral school, or, if applicable, the school where their research team is based. Any requests for exemptions to this rule must be substantiated and submitted to the doctoral college for consideration.

#### *Part 2 = relations with the PhD student*

The PhD supervisor is responsible for the quality of supervision and ensuring that research activities progress effectively for the duration of the PhD.

At least 40% of the supervision a student receives should come from the thesis supervisor who agrees to dedicate a significant portion of their time to the role. The supervisor must provide the majority of supervision. The minimum percentage for co-supervisors or co-advisors is 30%.

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In view of the above, the supervisory team is limited to no more than three members, including the supervisor, co-supervisor, and co-adviser. The establishment of enrolment may grant exceptions to allow a maximum of four members. This is subject to a reasoned request signed by the PhD supervisor and approved by the doctoral school, and supported, if applicable, by a co-supervision agreement.

Thesis supervisors cannot supervise more than six PhD students at the same time regardless of the proportion of supervision given to each student. Each doctoral school has the right to reduce this number in their internal regulations.

However, to accommodate specific situations, there is a procedure in place for requesting permission to supervise more than six PhD students.

The PhD supervisor must identify and make available the resources the student needs to complete research activities in the appropriate conditions. The PhD student must be kept informed of the schedule for interviews/meetings between themselves and their supervisor. Additionally, the PhD student must be fully integrated in their host unit where, insofar as possible, they will have access to the same facilities as permanent researchers to conduct their research activities (equipment, resources - including IT- , documentation, the opportunity to take part in seminars and conferences). The management of the host unit and the PhD supervisor must make sure that the PhD student has the practical resources they need to present their work at national and international scientific events.

The PhD student must keep their supervisors informed, at regular intervals, about the progress of their thesis and any difficulties encountered.

### **2.3 Enrolment and re-enrolment**

To prepare a thesis, the PhD student must re-enrol at the establishment where they are registered annually. At this point, the director of the doctoral school will check that the research, practical and financial conditions are still in place to enable the student to successfully conduct their research and prepare their thesis.

Requests to re-enrol should be supported by a form which includes the opinions of the PhD supervisor, the management of the host unit and the individual supervisory committee, based on the state of progress of the student's research. If these opinions are favourable, the director of the doctoral school will recommend that the head of the establishment of registration enrolls the student for their 2nd or 3rd year.

In the event of unfavourable opinions, the student has recourse to a mediation procedure if required. Enrolment for a 4th (or subsequent) year is dependent on favourable opinions from the individual supervisory committee and the management of the doctoral school (including the opinion of a possible ad hoc committee) in line with the school's internal regulations.

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If, after obtaining the opinion of the thesis supervisor, a decision is taken not to re-enrol a PhD student, the management of the doctoral school will inform the student, stating their reasons. The student may request a second opinion from the relevant bodies (research committee, academic council, or other body) at the establishment where they are enrolled. The decision not to re-enrol is taken by the head of the establishment who will notify the PhD student of this decision.

### **2.4 Individual supervisory committee (ISC)**

The PhD student receives support from an individual supervisory committee, comprising at least two people who are not working on the thesis. These people may or may not be accredited to supervise research (HDR). Members of the ISC must be external to the PhD student's research unit and at least one member should be external to the doctoral school.

The director of the doctoral school decides the composition of the committee within the first four months of enrolment, on the recommendation of the PhD supervisor and in consultation with the PhD student. The director of the host unit approves the composition of the ISC under the conditions specified by the doctoral school's council, as set out in the school's internal regulations and in the spirit of this charter. Before the first meeting of the ISC, the PhD student may propose an additional member, possibly from the same research unit. If a member of the committee resigns, they will be replaced in accordance with the same procedure. The ISC can be convened on the request of the PhD student or the PhD supervisor at any point during the PhD.

From the first year onwards, the individual supervisory committee will interview the PhD student at least once each year to evaluate arrangements for their inclusion in the team and training through research, the consistency of their training plan with their professional project and the progress of their PhD research. These interviews will be informed by an activity report, this charter, and the training agreement. The committee will pay particular attention to preventing any form of conflict, discrimination, or harassment.

During the interview, the ISC should, as a matter of course, give the PhD student time to talk in the absence of the PhD supervisor. Time for discussion between the ISC and the PhD supervisor, in the absence of the student, can also be organised on the request of the student or members of the ISC. In this latter case, the student must be informed of this discussion at the beginning of the interview.

The individual supervisory committee will then make recommendations and provide a detailed opinion about re-enrolment which it will send to the director of the doctoral school, the PhD student, and the PhD supervisor. If necessary, it can act as a mediator during the PhD programme.

Members of the ISC can sit on the thesis examination panel either as guests or examiners but cannot review the thesis research.

### **3. PLACE OF THE PHD STUDENT IN THE HOST UNIT: RIGHTS AND**

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### **RESPONSIBILITIES**

As a full member of their research unit, the PhD student is subject to the same regulations as all lecturer-researchers and researchers working at the unit particularly regarding publications, communications, patents and research ethics. The student will undertake joint tasks integral to research life at the unit, however they should not be expected to compensate for gaps in the unit's technical support or to take on tasks outside of their research project. The PhD supervisor and the head of the host unit have a duty to provide clear information about the PhD student's status and the position of their research in relation to their host team's activities. The PhD student must also be informed of the unit's organisational structures (e.g., statutes, internal regulations, unit council, health and safety conditions) and the representation of doctoral students in these structures according to the unit's internal regulations.

In return, the PhD student must undertake the working hours and pace of work expected at their host unit, with the objective of obtaining their doctoral diploma within the given timeframe. In the event of any difficulties, they can convene their ISC and consult the doctoral school at any moment.

As part of their PhD studies, the student is invited to play a role in activities to disseminate scientific and technical culture which have been developed within the unit or in which the unit is involved.

The PhD student and the PhD supervisory team agreed to respect the internal regulations at the doctoral school they are attached to, the establishment of enrolment and the host unit.

### **4. THESIS DEFENCE PROCEDURES**

Arrangements for defending the thesis, in accordance with current national law and the procedures in place at establishments issuing national doctorate qualifications, are set out in the internal regulations for each doctoral school.

The composition of the thesis examination panel must comply with Article 18 of the Decree of 25 May 2016. It must be composed of 4 to 8 members. It should reflect a balanced representation of men and women, with at least one representative from each gender. At least half of its members must be external to the doctoral school and the establishment of enrolment, and include grade A personnel or equivalent, in the sense of Article 6 of the Decree of 25 May 2016. If a scenario should arise in which the PhD supervisor and any co-supervisors are all members of the panel, it is recommended that this panel is comprised of at least five members.

The status of university professor or equivalent is based on the decrees of 1992<sup>3</sup> and 2011<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Decree of 15 June 1992 setting the list of civil service corps equivalent to university professors and senior lecturers for the purpose of appointing members of the National Universities Council  
<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000019860291/2020-09-13>

<sup>4</sup>Decree of 10 February 2011 regarding the equivalence grid for lecturer-researcher' titles, work and duties mentioned in articles 22 and 43 of Decree<sup>o</sup> 84-431 of 6 June 1984



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and the decree regarding the emeritus status of university professors and senior lecturers<sup>5</sup>. Emeritus professors and researchers are not included in the 50% quota for university professors or equivalent and cannot chair thesis defence panels.

### **5. PUBLICATION AND PROMOTION OF THE THESIS**

The quality and impact of research activities undertaken during the PhD can be evaluated through communications, publications, patents, and industrial reports to which the PhD student has contributed. These aspects should be listed in the PhD student's research compendium.

The publication of thesis research in reviews or peer-reviewed works recognised by CNU and HCERES departments and/or the filing of patents are strongly encouraged. The same goes for the communication of results presented at national or international conferences. When submitting an application to defend their thesis, and in the absence of a stricter rule set by the doctoral school and specified in its internal regulations, the PhD student is advised to refer to at least the equivalent of a publication or international level communication which has been validated through a peer review process (programme committee, editorial committee, conference presentation, etc).

It is the responsibility of the PhD supervisor to encourage, advise and support the student with publishing and promoting their research activities.

Publications, patents, and industrial reports connected to research conducted by the PhD student, whether the thesis itself or articles written before or after the thesis defence, must list the PhD student among the co-authors and any potential rights holders.

The PhD student must adhere to ethical codes and practices for their discipline and the ethical norms supported by different national codes of ethics; expressly undertake not to commit plagiarism; and respect copyright law, and rules and regulations on authorship, disseminating research results (open archive dissemination and confidentiality), and intellectual property.

### **6. MEDIATION PROCEDURES**

Any persistent dispute between the PhD student and members of their supervisory team should be brought to the attention of the director of the host unit who will endeavour to help the parties resolve the matter.

If this fails, the PhD student, the members of the supervisory team and the unit director will refer the matter to the director of the doctoral school (or the deputy director of the site) who will form a mediation group comprising at least two members of the doctoral school's council, one of whom will represent the student. This group, without divesting anyone of their

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<https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/loda/id/LEGITEXT000023665054/2020-01-01>

<sup>5</sup>Decree n° 2021-1423 of 29 October 2021 regarding the emeritus status of university professors and senior lecturers. <https://www.legifrance.gouv.fr/jorf/id/JORFTEXT000044273426>

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responsibilities, will listen to the parties and suggest a solution. By nature of its remit, the mediation group must be impartial.

If the dispute involves ethical matters or questions of research integrity, the director of the doctoral school will take the matter up with the adviser for research integrity at the establishment where the PhD student is enrolled, if such a role is in place. If necessary, the PhD student, a member of the PhD supervision team and the director of the host unit can also take the matter up with the adviser for research integrity at the establishment of enrolment.

If mediation fails again, the PhD student, the PhD supervisor and the director of the host unit can ask the head of the establishment where the student is enrolled to appoint a new mediator. If mediation fails again, final recourse can be made to the head of the establishment of enrolment.

The doctoral school and the establishment of enrolment will ensure that they keep each other informed of the conclusions of any mediation measures they implement.

### **7. PARTICIPATION IN SURVEYS FROM THE PAYS DE LA LOIRE DOCTORAL COLLEGE**

The PhD student agrees to provide feedback on their doctoral training through processes organised by the doctoral college (annual survey on organisation of PhDs, training evaluations, etc) with the goal of continually improving doctoral programmes.

On enrolling for their PhD studies, the student agrees to respond to surveys on career outcomes conducted by the Pays de la Loire Doctoral College on behalf of establishments in the five years following their thesis defence.

To this end, the PhD student agrees to provide their establishment with a current email address where they can be contacted during the five years following their thesis defence.

*The undersigned declare that they have read the PhD charter and the training agreement and will comply with all its clauses.*

Signatures

The PhD student (place and date, surname and first name):	The PhD supervisor(s) and co-supervisor(s) (place(s), date(s), surname(s) and first name(s)):
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**Cc: The director of the host unit  
The site director for the Doctoral School  
The head of the establishment of enrolment**